

Jesus Speaks About Sin

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[0 : 00] And he called the people to him again and said to them, hear me all of you and understand. There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him.

! But the things that come out of a person are what defiles him. And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciple asked him about the parable.

And he said to them, then are you also without understanding? Do you not see whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him?

Since it enters not his heart, but his stomach is expelled. Thus declares all food clean. And he said, what comes out of a person is what defiles him.

For from within, out of the heart of a man, comes evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sexuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

[1 : 16] All of these, all of these evil things come from within. They defile a person. Here ends the word of God. Thank you very much for reading, Michelle.

Recently, I heard a sad story about a young man who passed away. He was aware that he was sick, but he wasn't aware of how sick he was.

And because of that, he neglected to give attention to his condition until it was too late.

This morning, as we continue our third sermon in our four-part Jesus Speaks About Sermon series, we come to this passage in Mark 7, in which Jesus speaks about a serious heart condition that all people are born with.

But it's not a medical heart condition. It's a spiritual heart condition. And Jesus tells us that this spiritual heart condition is why we sin.

[2 : 32] And so in our remaining time this morning, I want us to hear afresh these words of Jesus, what he has to say to us about sin.

So first, let me pray for us. Would you bow in prayer? Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that we can gather in this place this morning. We thank you, Lord, that we do so on the finished work of Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead and who conquered sin and death and who promises that he will one day come again.

Lord, we thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to be with us, to lead us into all truth. And we ask in this moment that you would grant us illumination, that you would open our hearts to the truth of your word.

Lord, you and your sovereignty have brought us all in this place and you know what we need. Lord, you know what those who are watching or listening online need.

And so would you draw near to us in our various points of need and cause us to hear your word as we should and to respond as we should. Would you meet us now as we open your word, we pray in Jesus' name.

[4 : 01] Amen. So what does this passage have to say to us about sin? What does Jesus have to say to us about sin?

That's the question that I want to seek to answer in our remaining time this morning. And to help you follow along, I've organized the sermon under two headings. And the first is the internal problem of sin.

The context for these words of Jesus start in verse 1 of Mark 7. And we see the Pharisees taking note of some of the disciples of Jesus who were eating without washing their hands.

And Mark tells us in verses 3 and 4 why the Pharisees took note. It was because the Pharisees and all the Jews, is what Mark says, the Pharisees and all the Jews, whenever they came from the marketplace, they washed their hands in accordance with the tradition of the elders before they would eat food.

And while you might think that they did it for hygienic reasons, that's not why they did it. They didn't do it because they were scrupulous about personal hygiene.

[5 : 23] The concern behind it was not about germs. It was about Gentiles. Gentiles. And they did their very best not to associate with Gentiles because according to them, Gentiles weren't clean, they were ungodly, and you came into contact with them, you defiled yourself.

And in the marketplace, it was a place where everybody went. The Jews went, the Gentiles went, and in the marketplace, they ran the risk, so they thought, of becoming contaminated by touching things that Gentiles touched.

And so when they would come from the marketplace, they would wash their hands. So their concern was not moral defilement.

Sorry, their concern was moral defilement. It wasn't any kind of germs that they may have come into contact with. And so in verse 5, they questioned Jesus about his disciples not following the rules and the traditions of the elders.

And it's interesting to look at what Mark tells us. Mark doesn't say that all of the disciples didn't wash their hands. He said some of the disciples didn't wash their hands. So evidently, there were some disciples who followed the rules of the elders.

[6 : 56] But they asked Jesus, why do your disciples not follow the traditions of the elders? And starting in verse 6, Jesus begins to respond to them.

And he calls them hypocrites. And in the day of Jesus, a hypocrite was an actor in a Greek play. That was the term for the person who acted in a Greek play.

This person in the Greek play would wear a mask. And you've kind of seen it when people do pantomimes where they put on a mask. And these people in the Greek plays would put on a mask. And essentially, what they would do was they were masking their true identity to act a different role. And over time, people who lived a life that was not consistent with who they really were came to be known as hypocrites.

And so Jesus calls them hypocrites because they were pretending to be who they truly were not. He calls them hypocrites who were giving lip service to God.

[8 : 11] He said their lips were ne'er to God but their hearts were far from Him. And He told them that they were worshipping God in vain because they had made the doctrines of men the commandments of God.

They were teaching the doctrines of men as if they were the commandments of God. And then in verses 9 to 13, Jesus goes on and He points to some of the follies of the Pharisees, some of the foolish things that they were doing, thinking that it made them morally upright and closer to God. And now when we come to verse 14, which is the verse where our text for this morning starts, we see Jesus calling the people to Himself.

And He says something very profound to them. He says something that is certainly a further correction of the folly of the Pharisees and the scribes.

Notice again what He says in verse 15. He says, Hear me, all of you, and understand there is nothing outside a person that by going into Him can defile Him.

[9 : 34] But the things that come out of a person are what defile Him. but His own disciples didn't understand what He said.

Jesus spoke a parable. They understood it to be a parable. And so when they went into the house, Mark tells us that they asked Jesus about this parable. And Jesus goes on to explain to them that food that is eaten cannot defile a person because it enters not his heart but his stomach and is expelled.

So what is Jesus really saying? What is He saying exactly? There are some people who use these words of Jesus as a license to put whatever they want to put in their bodies.

For example, like drugs. But clearly that's not what Jesus was teaching. Jesus was not at all saying that we can put whatever we want to put in our bodies.

And the disciples, I think, understood at least that and that is why they asked Jesus to explain the parable that He had just uttered. They wanted it interpreted so they could apply it to their lives.

[10 : 56] I think we know that parables are stories that teach a moral or spiritual lesson. lesson. And so the parables will be rightly interpreted if we are going to grasp the lesson that is being taught.

So in verses 18 to 19 Jesus explains that the defilement that He is talking about is not defilement from food. And that's because whatever we take into our bodies in the form of food is passed out in the form of waste.

But today there are people, modern day scribes and Pharisees, who believe that we are defiled by certain foods, the kinds of foods that we eat or what we should eat, what we shouldn't eat.

And some would even go as far as to say that we sin when we eat certain foods. And the main group that I have in mind and that some of you would have in mind would be Seventh Adventists, who go to great lengths to avoid certain foods like pork and shellfish and fish without scales.

And this is not to say that Adventists in general are not believers. God is people everywhere. And so there would be some who are trusting in Jesus, not trusting in what they eat or don't eat, or trusting in the Sabbath, but there are some who are trusting in Jesus, despite these practices that they may have.

[12:39] But the point that Jesus makes is that food does not defile us. Mark tells us at the end of verse 19 he interprets what Jesus says, and he says, by this what he said, he declared all foods clean, meaning you can eat whatever foods you wish, and it will not spiritually defile you.

Now, let's be clear about what Jesus didn't say. Jesus didn't say all food is healthy. All right? He did not say that. As a matter of fact, some food will get us to see Jesus sooner than other foods. But Jesus didn't say that all food is healthy. Some foods are unhealthy. Some foods are laced with things that aren't good for us, like cholesterol, and some foods would overwork our digestive system, and humanly speaking, just would not be good for us.

It doesn't mean, though, that if you adopt a healthy lifestyle, and you eat well, that you will live longer. The Lord keeps us honest with these things. All of our days are in his hands, and sometimes you'll go to a funeral, and you'll see people carrying the coffin, and if you knew the history of the person in the coffin, and those outside the coffin, you would realize that those outside the coffin should be in the coffin, and those in the coffin should be carrying them.

And so the Lord keeps us honest with all of that. But I make these points about food in passing, because Jesus made them in passing.

[14:22] The point that Jesus was making was not about food. The point that Jesus was making is found in verses 20 to 23. look again at what he says.

Mark records, and he said, what comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, evil, slander, pride, foolishness.

All of these evil things come from within, and they defile a person. The point that Jesus is making is that we are not defiled by the food that is in our stomachs.

He says, we are defiled by the sin that is in our hearts. That's the point that Jesus is making. And Jesus was addressing a further folly of the Pharisees.

The first one was that they needed to be very concerned about washing their hands, and they were. And that was not what was defiling them. And they were particular about what they ate, and that was not defiling them.

[15:57] And Jesus gets to the heart of the issue. He is essentially saying, this ought to be your concern. The same scruples that you have, the same concerns you have about these external things, you should be concerned about what is going on within you.

sin. Now, this list of sins that Jesus gives us in verses 12 and 13, sorry, in verses 21 to 23, it's not an exhaustive list.

It's a representative list. You know, sometimes we could read a list like this, and because maybe a sin that may be close to us isn't listed, we kind of feel good.

But the point is, Jesus is only giving a representation of sins and helping us to see how pervasive sin is in our hearts.

Now, we all know that Jesus is not referring to the organ, the heart, that pumps blood through our bodies. He's not referring to something physical like that.

[17:09] Instead, Jesus is referring to heart the way the Bible typically uses the word heart to refer to the center of our being, to refer to the seat of our mind, our will, and our emotions.

That's the heart that Jesus is talking about. It is who we are at our very core. And Jesus says, that is where sin flows from.

And notice what he does in verse 23. Jesus refers to all sin with one description, evil things. Evil things.

He says, all these evil things come from within, and they defile a person. The sins we commit were all manufactured in our hearts.

And that includes the respectable sins, the sins that we consider small sins, the sins that we tolerate, the sins we're not overly concerned about.

[18:22] Jesus says they are evil things as well. evil things are. So what is Jesus saying? What did Jesus say to his disciples?

And what is he saying to us by extension? Jesus is saying to us that sin is not an external problem. Sin is not an external problem.

Sin is an internal problem that we all have. It is an internal problem that at its very core is in our hearts.

It's who we are. And sadly and wrongly the Pharisees had minimized the issue of moral defilement to external matters.

Now you might be thinking, well, how does sin enter us and be able to come out of us?

[19:24] But notice what Jesus says. Jesus doesn't speak about sin entering us. He only addresses sin coming out of us. And the point should be clear to all of us.

The point should be clear that what Jesus is helping us to see, that all of us have an internal sin factory.

we don't need sin to be manufactured outside of us to enter into us, to come out of us. We come into this world with a sin factory, a factory that is able to manufacture evil things.

And this is true with the smallest child that comes into this world. And that child, like the rest of us, matures over time and is able to mature to manufacture bigger sins.

And why is this? This is because we have all inherited the spiritual DNA of our forefather Adam, who rebelled against God and who plunged the whole of humanity into sin.

[20:41] And if you find this hard to accept, just think about your experiences with young babies and those of us who are parents. Just think about the experience we've had with that wonderful, adorable, wonderful baby that we brought into the world.

And we never had to teach that child to do evil. Never to teach him to do anything wrong. Never to teach him to be ungrateful. Never to teach him to grab things. Never to teach him to be selfish.

Just has the ability to do that. And over time, those things we see, they just mature and they blossom. And our children come right alongside us and they have the same ability to manufacture sin from within.

I'm sure you've heard people say, or you may have said it yourself, don't cause me sin. Or you say, man, let me tell you, she made me sin today.

No. It came from within. We manufactured that. We didn't need any help to do it. We did that all alone.

[22:02] sin. So the issue is not so much protecting our hearts so that sin doesn't enter in. The issue is that the hearts of men, women, boys, and girls are sin factories.

Christians. Jeremiah 17 verse 9, I don't know if it's being projected yet, but this is what Jeremiah 17 verse 9 says. This is the spiritual diagnosis of a human heart.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it?

Now, this is so indicting that it is easy for us to recoil from it and say, well, that's not really my heart.

No. This is the diagnosis of the human heart. The heart of all people. The smallest child to the most mature adult fits this description.

[23:17] It is deceitful above all things, desperately sick, and we can't understand our own hearts. And see, this is why when people say, you know, obey your heart, you don't want to obey your heart.

Our hearts are deceitful above all things. Our hearts are desperately sick. We cannot understand our own hearts.

We need the help of the Spirit to discern our own hearts. We need the help of brothers and sisters to help us to sort through our own heart. And we are not wise when we lean to our own understanding.

We are wise when we recognize this to be true, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick. Brothers and sisters, this is true for all human beings, whatever their race,

whatever their nationality, whatever their sense.

I want you to imagine for a moment that you go to the doctor, and the doctor diagnoses you with some serious condition, and he tells you how you got this condition, and then he says to you, do you have any questions?

[24 : 35] I can almost guarantee that all of us, without exception, would want to ask the doctor, we would ask the doctor, well, okay, what is the cure?

Is there some remedy for this condition that I have? Do I need medicine to fix it? Do I need surgery to fix it? I need you to tell me what I need to do, or what you're going to do, in light of this diagnosis you gave me?

Here in Mark 7, it appears that Mark leaves us hanging with these words of Jesus, or the words of Jesus leave us hanging, because Jesus diagnoses the condition of the human heart.

He tells us it manufactures evil, and doesn't say anything more at this particular point. But the truth is that Mark is not leaving us hanging.

Mark is writing his gospel like the other gospel writers, and they are making a case to their hearers. Mark is laying out his gospel in a particular way to get to a particular point, the same way the other gospel writers wrote their gospels.

[26 : 05] And Mark is trying to help us to see that activities like washing hands, avoiding association with particular people or particular things, that those things are not the solution to the sick heart.

that all of us actually have. Mark fully intends that his readers would engage these words of Jesus and think about them and ask and say, well, if this is my condition, what is the solution to it?

You see, if we think about what Jesus says, if we're truly thinking, you can't help but come to the point where you say, well, okay, that's our condition, what's the solution for that? And this brings you to my second and final point, the external solution to sin.

What is the external solution to sin? What is the external solution to this diagnosis that Jeremiah gives us about the human heart that is deceitful and it is desperately sick?

brothers and sisters, there's only one solution to such a heart. There's only one solution for such a heart and that solution is a new heart.

[27 : 39] We need a new heart. And this is an important truth that we need to grasp because sadly, when the world thinks about sin and they see the results of sin, the last thing they think about is the need for a new heart.

When governments think about it, they think about you need a program, you need something to intervene, to do this or to do that. And everything is trying to manage the outside.

heart. But what scripture teaches us is that we need a new heart. We don't need better practices.

We don't need to adopt some new habits. No, what we need is a new heart. Not just focusing on not doing this and start doing that, but we need a new heart.

And God knew this all along. And so from the Old Testament, we see prophecies about what God will do to address this sinful condition of his people.

[29 : 04] And so, for example, in Ezekiel chapter 36, verses 22 to 27, we have some good news from the lips of the prophet Ezekiel.

Some 600 years before Jesus would have uttered these words in Mark 7. Here's what the Lord promised to the lips of Ezekiel.

Chapter 36, beginning in verse 25, that I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from your uncleanness, and from all your idols, and I will cleanse you, and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. Brothers and sisters, this is one of the most important Old Testament scriptures that we in the new covenant need to understand.

This is what God promised. This is the new covenant that the Lord has promised. And this prophecy actually starts in verse 22.

[30 : 36] And what's striking about this passage is that eight times in six verses, God says, I will do this, I will do this, I will do this. And it's quite the opposite of so much of what we hear today. So much of what we hear today in response to our sinful condition is come do this, come do that, stop doing this, and start doing that.

And some of us have been down that road, and we know it's a dead-end street. Some of us have been down that road, and we know that it's only despair, because no human effort can change this heart condition of ours.

And it is the most certain way to bring disappointment to anyone, to call them to go to some human activity to bring about this change that only God can bring about by giving us a new heart.

There's another term that the Bible in the New Testament refers to this new heart that God promised through the lips of Ezekiel.

It's a new birth, or being born again, or regeneration. And this is the means by which God gives us this new heart.

[32 : 00] God makes us into a new creation. That's what the Bible says about those who come to Christ. It said, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, never existed before. Something new has taken place.

That is how radically sick we are, and that's how radical the solution needs to be. It gives us a new birth.

It's a being born from above. It's a being begotten from above. And that's how he gives us a new heart that no longer manufactures sin.

Ezekiel tells us what this new birth entails. In verse 25, he says, it's a cleansing from sin and idolatry.

And idolatry is the worship of anything or anyone other than God himself. Verse 26, he says, it's a new heart and a new spirit. It's removing the heart of stone, symbolic of spiritual death, and replacing it with the heart of flesh, symbolic of spiritual life.

[33 : 11] And verse 27 says, God will put his spirit within us. And he says, and he will cause us to live by his word and to obey his commandments.

And so brothers and sisters, the wonderful news is that the new birth closes our sin factory. Do we still sin?

Yes, we do. But not in that sense that we sinned before we came to Christ. The new birth reorders our affections.

It reorders our desires. God works on our will. He causes us to want to serve him and to love him. The Bible says, we love because God first loved us.

We will battle sin until the day that we die. But brothers and sisters, any of us who have served the Lord long enough, we know it's different from when we were not serving Christ. You can't even talk about them in the same breath.

[34 : 23] They are different. We live in fallen bodies, and so we battle our flesh. We live in a fallen world, and so there's temptation in the world, and we have a relentless enemy of our souls, and he will tempt us.

But brothers and sisters, we, as we sang this morning, we are not what we used to be. We're new creations in Jesus Christ, and our new hearts, though they are still capable of sin, they no longer manufacture sin as a way of life.

And this becomes increasingly true over time through this process of sanctification, which we're called to when we come to Christ. We're called to sanctification, which is that over time, we become less sinful and more Christ-like.

But here's what we should understand. The work of the Spirit in regenerating us, in giving us a new birth, God did that all by himself.

He did that all by himself. The same way we had no part in bringing ourselves into this world physically, we have no part in bringing our new birth about spiritually.

[35 : 53] God did that all by himself, and thank God that he did, because any contribution that we would have brought to it would have ensured that that didn't happen. But here's the other part, though.

This work of sanctification that takes place in our lives is not just what God does. It is a cooperative work of the Spirit between us and the Lord.

Theologians refer to it as this synergistic work. What Christ did in our salvation, what God did all by himself, that's that monergistic work, all by himself, one, by himself.

But this synergistic work, we are called to give ourselves to the things of God. And God has given us means, he's given us his word, he's given us prayer, he's given us corporate worship like we are gathered this morning, fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ, coming to the Lord's table.

These are all means to help us to grow in godliness so that over time we become less sinful and more Christ-like. And you know, I just want to say this to us, sometimes we can be more aware of where we fall short as believers and where we need to grow than where we no longer fall short and where we have grown.

[37 : 27] Because the grace of God is at work in our lives. And though we're not yet perfect, we are moving in a direction where we're growing in godliness.

But how is this new birth made possible? How is it that we are able to have hearts of stone turned into hearts of flesh?

At the end of their gospels, Mark and all the other gospel writers, the other three gospel writers, they tell us how the new birth is possible.

They tell us how it is that sinners no longer have to focus on the externals, washing hands and avoiding touching this and avoiding touching that.

the four gospel writers all end the same place. They end recounting the story of Jesus of Nazareth ascending Calvary's hill and giving his life as a ransom for many.

[38 : 45] They all end the same place where Jesus becomes a substitute for sinners, where he takes on the sin of sinners that they may take on his righteousness.

They all end the same place where Jesus dies so that we might live. They all end the same place where Jesus has a spear thrust through him taking away his physical life that we may come to enjoy spiritual lives, that we may have hearts, new hearts that are capable of loving God and serving God.

And brothers and sisters, this is the only true and lasting solution to our heart problem. no amount of self-effort, no amount of strength that we have within ourselves can produce this solution to our sin problem that we all have.

And so if you've come to Christ, if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior this morning, there's much to rejoice about. The grace of God has come to you, and saved you.

You know, one of the ways that we are able to see the grace of God at work in our lives is we know ourselves and I think if all of us would be honest this morning, we would be the first to acknowledge that we fall short.

[40 : 40] we miss the mark. None of us hits the bullseye every single time we fall short. But there's a gracious and kind and loving Heavenly Father who in spite of our failures, in spite of our shortcomings, he holds on to us and he assures us that he is going to bring us safely home.

Not because we make it home by our perfection, none of us will, but he brings us safely home because the work that he began in us, he has promised that he will complete it to the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And brothers and sisters, we have a day to look forward to, we have a day to look forward to when there will be no more sin, there will be no more temptation. When the Lord Jesus himself will come and he will usher in a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells and where all the sorrows of this life will be removed and the tears of this life will be wiped away.

And thank God that we can live in this life and we can look forward to that day and Christ will return and take us home.

But if you're here this morning or watching online and you do not know Jesus Christ, you have a heart problem. No amount of cosmetics, no amount of good habits that you adopt can change your heart problem.

[42 : 22] Only Jesus can do that. And so I say to you this morning, if you do not know the Savior, come to Jesus. Come to Jesus and what you will find is a Savior who will not turn you away.

You'll find a Savior who is quick to pardon all of your sins. And he will turn your heart of stone into a heart of flesh, a heart that can love your creator, a heart that can serve him.

And so I urge you today, come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Let's pray. Oh, Heavenly Father, we are grateful that you have made it possible that those of us who have hearts of flesh, of stone, can have hearts of flesh.

You've made it possible that those of us who are born with sin factories can have them closed by the new birth.

Lord, I pray that you would help us to recognize the mercy that has come to us, those of us who have trusted in the Savior, and those who have not yet come to Christ.

[43 : 49] Would you save them by your mercy and by your grace? Lord, would you do your work in every heart this morning, we pray.

In Christ's name. Amen. Let's start with our closing song.