

The Heart Of The Matter

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] Remember, there's two truths at stake in these 23 verses. The main thing that we're focusing here is that the Phariseeism, the legalism of these men, did two things. It denied the authority of the Bible, and it preached a false gospel that cannot actually save you. That's always the danger of legalism.

It's not that it limits our freedoms. It's not that it keeps us from doing the things that we want to do. That's not the danger of legalism. The danger in legalism is that it says that the Bible is not enough, and it tells me that I'm acceptable to God based on what I do, not based on who He is or on what He has done for us.

That's the danger. That's the battle of this passage, okay? So we've got to keep our focus on that. It's not just about these rules. It's not about them telling us what to do. It's about the denial of the authority of the Bible and about a false gospel that was leading the people astray.

Every verse in all four gospels is absolutely necessary. It's essential to us. But when we get to Mark's gospel, there is a sense of heightened focus as we read his book, as we read his gospel. Here's why. Of the four gospels, it's by far the shortest, and relative to the others, it has very little of Jesus' teaching in it. Now, that's not because Mark was unaware of what Jesus said. It's not that he was unaware of the sermons.

[1 : 30] Of course he was. He might have even been there in some circumstances as we understand his life, and we know that most of what he's writing is from the eyewitness account of Peter.

So he knew what Jesus taught. But through the inspiration of God, what Mark is giving us here is what he felt was absolutely necessary for his readers to understand when it came to the teaching of Jesus.

So when we get to a passage like this, and we see in Mark's gospel, Jesus teaching something, we really need to slow down and listen carefully, because it's important. It's all important.

But we need to come to this with a particular heightened focus as we look at it, and here's why.

What Jesus said in these verses is crucial to our understanding of the gospel.

Verses 14 to 23. It's crucial. If you don't grasp the message that Jesus is preaching here, it will be impossible for you to appropriately understand the wonder of his grace in the gospel.

[2 : 37] You can't understand it without grasping this. So we need to listen. That's exactly what Jesus actually says to do in this passage. Listen. Understand what I'm saying.

I've found it helpful to break this up into three sections, and so we'll do that as we go. If that's helpful to you, I'll make note of it, and you can write it down, okay? My first section of my notes is this. We see an urgent proclamation.

An urgent proclamation. We see this in verses 14 to 16. Look with me at verse 14. He called the people to him again and said to them, Hear me, all of you, and understand.

Now, verse 1 suggests that the Pharisees and scribes had encircled Jesus, perhaps, to create some kind of separation between him and the people that were with him in that moment.

In fact, look back with me at verse number 1. Now, when the Pharisees gathered to him, they have encircled him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem. There's this picture that's beginning to be painted here that this group has come.

[3 : 40] It's perhaps great in number. However, they have stood in front. They have created separation between Jesus and the people that he was teaching. And I don't know if that was their intention necessarily to do, or if they were just engaging in a way that the people weren't.

But no matter what the case is, there certainly is a picture here of how religion stands in the way of the gospel. Do you see that picture being made?

These Pharisees and scribes have stood in between Jesus and the people. Jesus is here to preach the truth. The Pharisees are getting in the way of that. And it's a great picture of what religion does. That's exactly what they were doing.

They were actually getting in the way of the truth. And at the same time, they were saying, No, we have the truth. They were making these promises of eternal life and acceptance with God based on what they did and based on their own religion.

And what they ended up doing was actually being an obstacle, an obstacle to the truth of the gospel. And that's what religion always does. Mere religion stands as an obstacle to truth.

[4 : 48] It doesn't actually deliver on the claims that it makes. And after exposing this hypocrisy of the Pharisees, look what Jesus does then.

Verse 14. He calls the people to him. And again, I think there's some powerful imagery here. While religion stands in the way of truth, Jesus, on the other hand, is calling us to the truth.

So there's this whole conversation that he's having with these men, and they're going back and forth. And it really was a one-sided conversation. Eventually, Jesus was exposing who they were. And when Jesus felt like he was done dealing with these men, he turns and he calls all the people to come to him, calling all the people to come to him.

That's what Jesus does. Religion makes great promises that it can't deliver on. It actually stands as an obstacle to the truth. But all at the same time, Jesus is calling us to that truth.

Through his word, by the Spirit, he calls us to that truth. And after all, that's exactly why he came.

That was the whole purpose of him coming to earth. Remember in chapter 1, he said, let us go to the next towns that I may preach there also.

[6 : 00] Why? For that is why I came, he said. Well, what was his preaching all about? Repent and believe the good news. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

What's he doing in that message? He's not condemning people in that message. He's calling people to him in that message. He's calling people to the truth. We get to chapter 2 in this whole exchange with the Pharisees over the fact that he had had dinner with Matthew and the other tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus says, I did not come to call the righteous. Why did I come? I came to call sinners. What's he doing? He's calling people to truth. That was his purpose, calling them to the gospel.

What does Luke tell us? Jesus said, the son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost.

What was Jesus' whole purpose in coming?

To call people to the truth. And we see this fantastic picture that as religion is standing in the way as an obstacle to that truth, Jesus calls us to it.

[7 : 11] And he says, come here. And there's an urgency in what he's saying. It's like a parent who hits that tone.

You know what I mean? You know that tone? Even if you're not a parent, if you're a child, you know the tone, right? Like I can tell Ashlyn and Harper something and know that in the way that I said it, in the way that I went about it, they're not going to hear anything that I'm saying.

They hear me. They don't listen. Whatever. But when I really want them to get it, what do I do?

Look at me. Look at me. Listen to me.

Listen to me. And we go on from there. That's what Jesus is doing here. There's seriousness about what he's saying. And he's turning away from the Pharisees and he's calling the people and he's saying, listen to me.

All of you, he says. He clarifies it. Nobody needs to be doing something else right now. Get off your phones. Stop talking to your neighbor. Whatever it is you're doing, stop and listen to me right now.

[8 : 11] All of you. Everyone listen. There's urgency. Why? Because the gospel was at stake in what was happening in this conversation. This wasn't a matter of just simple doctrinal disagreement.

They weren't fussing over interpretations. That's not what's happening here. This was a battle over the gospel. And it was urgent. Look at verse 15. Once they gathered, here's what he said.

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 defile him.

This is a shocking statement. Now think about what has prompted it. The Pharisees have come and they've said, we can't believe that you would allow your disciples to have a meal with defiled hands.

That defiles them. That makes them unacceptable to God. That was their perspective. And Jesus essentially responds with this. If you think that's a problem, what are you going to do about the filthiness of your heart?

[9 : 16] Your greatest problem is not what is outside of you.

It's what's inside of you, Jesus is. And how are you going to cleanse your heart? That's his point. And so it'll probably be helpful here for just a quick moment.

I don't want to go too far into this to explain what this terminology of defiled and undefiled or clean and unclean is. So let's just talk about that for a second. The Old Testament especially often uses this category of clean and unclean in regards to ceremonial or ritual purity.

That's really what the Pharisees were on about here. They weren't talking about spiritual purity.

They're talking about ceremonial purity. And so someone who was ceremonially unclean in the Old Testament, they could not go to the temple for worship.

They were excluded from the community of God's people. And to be declared ceremonially clean and to have those prohibitions lifted, a number of things had to happen.

[10 : 32] A prescribed amount of time would be given based on whatever it was that had actually made them unclean. They had to wait a certain amount of time. It may just be waiting till the evening. It could be a week. It could be 40 days.

It could be a number of time depending on what it is. So they had to wait a little bit. Then they had to cleanse themselves. They had to take a bath essentially. And then they had to make a sacrifice. And that's what's interesting about this whole dynamic of clean and unclean. What makes you clean is not merely taking a bath. It's making a sacrifice. That's significant as we understand the gospel, isn't it?

And we're looking at the Bible as a whole. But these clean and unclean categories is what the Pharisees are dealing with here. And so there were a lot of things that could put you in an unclean category.

And it wasn't always related to sin. If you touched a dead body, you were considered unclean. And you had to go through a ritualistic cleansing and sacrifice. If you contracted a certain disease, you had to go through a series of deals in order to be clean again.

[11 : 37] If you gave birth, you were unclean. There were things that went along with that. So it wasn't always related to sin. But there were lots of these things that God had given the people of Israel that signified their ceremonial uncleanness, which meant they couldn't go to the temple and they couldn't participate in some of the community things.

Okay, that was the purpose. Now, the reason God gave them all of this was to remind them of his own holiness. As they constantly were thinking about how undefiled or unclean they were, it forced them to think about how clean and holy God is because this is his standard.

They're being held to his standard. And so he gave it to them in order that they may see his holiness and in order that they may constantly be reminded of an inward defilement, of an inward sin, of their condition that desperately needed God's mercy.

That was the purpose of all of those things. That's why God had given it. Now, the Pharisees completely ignored their need for spiritual cleansing from sin and they focused entirely on this external moralism.

So they believed that everything that defiled them was external. And so long as they obeyed the rules and they did the things, they were okay. As long as they washed their hands and as long as they went through all the stuff that they had said, they would be accepted by God.

[13 : 04] So they saw themselves as clean on the basis of their obedience to the law. And when Jesus spoke of being defiled, he wasn't speaking of a ceremonial defilement, but spiritual, okay?

So they're starting from two different places. Pharisees are only concerned about this ritual cleanness. Jesus isn't concerned about ritual cleanness. He's talking about the heart, this spiritual impurity.

So that while touching an unclean animal would make a person ceremonially unclean, it is not what made them spiritually unclean. And the Pharisees had basically ignored the deeper problem.

MacArthur explained it this way. I think this is helpful. The Lord's point was that external things like meals eaten with unwashed hands are not the source of spiritual impurity.

Rather, the defilement that offends God is internal, spiritual in its reality that has a corresponding internal source.

[14:10] Sinful pollution does not come from the outside, but it lies within the sinner, he says. That's a great way to explain this. And Jesus made this clearly with the Pharisees all the time.

In fact, why don't you turn with me to Matthew 23? We may do a little bit of turning today. Matthew 23, would you do that? This entire chapter, or at least the bulk of it, is a series of woes that Jesus is pronouncing against this group of men, these Pharisees and scribes.

There's seven of them listed here. I wanna read three of them to you so that you can see how Jesus was even defining this, okay? Matthew 23, look at verse 23. He says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you tithe, you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, which is justice and mercy and faithfulness.

These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel. What an image that is.

[15:20] This is the speck in the eye versus the beam sticking out of somebody's head. This is the same kind of thing. Jesus is saying, Woe to you, woe to you because you give all your money to the church, but you're a filthy, rotten sinner on the inside.

Look at the next one, verse 25. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

You blind Pharisee, you first clean the inside of the cup and the plate that the outside also may be clean. They had had it backwards, Jesus is saying. You think that you'll be clean on the outside because you do all the stuff.

No, you do all the stuff because God makes you clean on the inside. That's what he's getting at here. Verse 27. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. And let's get down to verse 33. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

[16:47] It's a rhetorical question. How are you gonna avoid hell? It's not because your hands are clean. It's not because you didn't eat unclean animals.

This was their problem. They thought that their salvation came from mere religion, but it doesn't. Salvation doesn't come from what you do.

And then you may notice here, as we go back to Mark 7, you may notice, depending on what translation you have with you today, that verse 16 is missing. It just goes from verse 15 to verse 17. It may be in brackets in your Bible, or maybe it's listed as a footnote as it is in mine. And the reason for that is that this particular verse, it didn't appear in any manuscript tradition until 500 years after Mark had actually written this gospel book.

And so we can understand with quite a bit of certainty that Mark didn't actually write this phrase. Now that doesn't mean that Jesus didn't say it. It just means that Mark didn't write it. And probably like we noted in chapter six with that whole issue in the story of John the Baptist, probably what happened was this was a marginal note or a commentary that a scribe had written.

[18:03] And just over time of hand copying manuscript after manuscript after manuscript, eventually this verse seems to have found its way in a manuscript tradition around the fifth or sixth century.

So that's why it's noted the way that it is in your Bible. But here's what it says that Jesus said. He that has ears to hear, let him hear. And we know Jesus said this a lot.

We've talked about it already in Mark's gospel. And what was the whole point of that? It underscores the urgency with which Jesus delivered this message to the people. Now, he wasn't just asking for them to hear him, to listen to him.

He wasn't asking for their attention. He was asking for their faith, their belief. When Jesus says, he that has ears to hear, let him hear. He's not saying, listen to me. He's saying, believe me, believe me.

And what is he encouraging these people so urgently to believe? That it's not the things on the outside that matter. It's your heart that is the problem. It's not your hands that need to be clean.

[19:06] It's your heart that needs to be cleaned. So we see this urgent proclamation quickly. We see a useful explanation, or at least as far as I've broken it down, a useful explanation, verses 17

through 19.

And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And so as was often the case, we've seen this already, that after Jesus's public teaching, often it would be followed by a time of private teaching or interpretation with his disciples.

Matthew's account actually adds a note here that I think helps us understand why the disciples were looking for clarity. In fact, why don't you turn to Matthew 15? It's just a few pages to the left. Matthew 15. In fact, if you're keeping notes in those scripture journals, you may just want to write Matthew 15 at the top of your page somewhere because this entire section of scripture is paralleled there.

Matthew chapter 15. And look with me at verse 12. Matthew says, Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?

[20 : 17] He answered, Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Leave them alone. They are blind guides.

And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. And it's at this point that Matthew says it was Peter that said, Well, please explain this to us.

Please explain this parable to us. Jesus in Matthew 13 had told this parable. You are probably familiar with it about the wheat and the tares or the wheat and the weeds. And basically in the story, there was the farmer who went and he planted his seed and it was good seed.

And then his enemy came in the middle of the night and he planted weeds or tares. And for a while, the tares looked exactly like they were supposed to look, but inside they were full of poison.

And over time, they were exposed for what they really were. And when they were exposed for what they really were, the harvesters come, they bundle up all the weeds, and then they burn them in the fire.

[21 : 21] And Jesus is saying, here in Matthew 15, he's bringing this imagery back to the disciples. He's saying these Pharisees are the tares. They're the weeds. They look like they've got it together on the outside.

Inside they're full of error and poison and devastatingly false gospel. And eventually they're gonna be bundled up and cast into the fire.

And not only them, but everyone who follows them and believes what they believe. He says they're blind leading the blind. And therefore both the blind and the ones that they're leading are going to find an eventual destruction.

That's what Jesus is saying. Now let's go back to Mark 7 and think about this question that the disciples are asking. It's at that point that they're thinking, I don't wanna be blind.

I certainly don't wanna head for that same destruction. Jesus, please help us understand this. Please help us understand this. It wasn't that they didn't understand the story.

[22 : 26] Of course, they understood the story, the illustration. What they didn't get was the truth that was behind it. They had difficulty grasping that. Now, before we give them a hard time, remember, these men lived their entire lives immersed in Pharisaical Judaism.

It's all they knew. It's all they knew. And now Jesus is coming. And it's not that they don't believe him. They believe him, but they don't understand. They're trying to understand it better.

They're trying to understand it more clearly because they didn't want to head for the same destruction that the Pharisees were. So here's the explanation, verse 18. And he said to them, Are you also without understanding?

Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him since it enters not his heart, but his stomach and is expelled? So the story is simple enough to understand.

Whatever we eat cannot spiritually defile us because it goes through the regular process of digestion and is expelled. It's as simple as that. Expelled here, literally, the literal translation is latrine or sewer.

[23 : 39] So Jesus is saying, What comes outside? That can't defile you. It's just food. So the emphasis on his explanation then is on this other phrase. It enters not his heart.

That's where the explanation is. It enters not his heart. So that the issue of spiritual impurity, what makes you unclean before God, is not a matter of external action or circumstance.

It's an issue of your heart. And of course, Jesus wasn't referring to a biological organ. He's talking about the inner man, who you really are.

That's what's defiled. That's what needs to be made clean. There's an important doctrine behind this, and I don't want to go too far into it, but R.C. Sproul, the late R.C. Sproul, used to say it this way.

I'm sure you've heard this. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners. We are not sinners because we sin.

[24 : 50] We sin because we're sinners. This is why David, in this great psalm of confession, in Psalm 51, he says, in sin did my mother conceive me.

He wasn't talking about an act of adultery. His mother and his father were chaste people. That's not what he meant. He meant from the moment of conception, I was in need of a savior because who I am, in my heart, I am unclean.

It's what Paul was getting on about in Romans 5. He says, in verse 18, one trespass led to condemnation for all men.

What one trespass? The sin of Adam. In other words, we are not born innocent and then corrupted by sinful behavior.

We're not born innocent and then corrupted by sinful behavior. We are actually born sinful and that is revealed in the sins that we live out in our day-to-day life.

[25 : 59] That's what Jesus is getting on about here. Your problem is you and my problem is me. And from the moment the Lord gave us life, because of Adam's sin, we were in need of redemption.

The Pharisees were fixated on this ceremonial cleansing because they wrongly believed that it was obedience to the law that could make them righteous. And there are plenty of people today that are just as deceived.

They think that as long as they follow all the rules, they go to church, they say their prayers, they do good for people, they give to the church or to charities or whatever it is that they're involved with. They think as long as they do those things that God will give them a pass, that they're pretty good people. And surely a good God doesn't send people to hell that are doing their best and trying their hardest.

And they've missed the point. I watched a documentary this week on the Battle of the Bulge from World War II. There was a soldier who was interviewed in the process of this.

[27 : 11] And if you understand that history, for a little bit more than a month, the U.S. Army infantry was in the Ardennes Forest and they were just getting hammered by German artillery.

I mean, just they're in these foxholes and they don't have clothes and they don't have ammunition. They're just getting shelled over and over and over. A lot of people died. Thousands died. One of these soldiers that actually survived was interviewed on this documentary.

And he said at one point in a particularly hard shelling of artillery, in my foxhole, because he was a good Roman Catholic, he said, he said his act of contrition.

It's a formatted prayer of confession, basically what it is. And he said, I said my act of contrition because I just assumed that I was going to die and I just wanted to make sure I was good. What he failed to understand is that there's no prayer.

There's no ritual. There's no thing you can do that will make you good because who you are is bad.

[28 : 19] And no amount of goodness that you do now can atone for any kind of evil that you've ever done in the past. When Jesus redeems us, it's not just that he redeems our behavior, he redeems our nature.

He redeems us as people. Obedience to the law can never provide eternal salvation. All it can do is reveal your sin and your need for Jesus.

Romans 3. By the works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight. That's pretty clear. Since through the law comes the knowledge of sin, that's his purpose.

It just shows you you're sinful. It doesn't make you righteous. Then he says, but the righteousness of God is this, faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

And then we get to verse 19 and Mark adds in this parenthetical statement. Thus he declared all foods clean. Now why did Mark have to say this?

[29 : 20] It's a parenthetical in your Bibles because Jesus didn't say it. This was a note that Mark was making. It's original to the text, but it's a note that Mark was making of application about what Jesus was saying.

And think about why he did this. This issue of dietary laws and circumcision was a contentious topic in the early church because there were Jews who were saved that were believing Christ that had a

hard time letting go of their Judaism.

And there were a lot of Gentiles that they were now worshiping with and they were trying to figure out, do these Gentiles need to be circumcised and follow dietary laws in order to truly be right with God?

And so this was a contentious debate. Mark is settling the debate and he's saying, look at what Jesus said. He declared foods are clean. It's not about what you eat. It's not about what you do. It's about who you are.

Jesus has fulfilled the law. Therefore, by faith in him, we receive the righteousness of God. That's the point of verse 19. Okay, let's move on. We're almost done. We see a universal application. So we've seen an urgent proclamation.

[30 : 22] We've seen a useful explanation. And now finally, we see a universal application. Look at verse 20. He said, It's just not uncommon today to hear someone say, in a way of counsel, you just need to follow your heart.

And of course, as believers, we know that's foolish. Do not follow your heart. Because Jeremiah said, the heart is deceitful above all things.

It's desperately sick. It's desperately sick. Who can know it? And then he says, I, the Lord, search the heart and test the mind to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.

Do you know what God was saying there in Jeremiah? You may look great on the outside, but I see your heart, and that's what I care about. So when you stand before judgment, before God, he's not going to ask you how many times you went to church.

He's going to look at your heart, and he's going to see the vileness that's there because it's in all of us. Don't follow your heart. It will lead you astray. Solomon knew this. He wrote in Proverbs 4, Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life.

[31 : 57] Be mindful of your heart, because who you are is what you do. Luke 6, Jesus said, The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure of his heart produces evil.

For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, he says. Jesus is essentially saying this. If washing your hands makes them clean, what's going to make your heart clean?

Because that's really your problem. You can't give your heart a bath. Which meant that they couldn't make it clean.

Nothing they did could make them clean. And he gives this illustration. He says, Let me show you how undefiled you actually are.

And he gives this whole list of sins. There's 13 of them. There's two sections. The first section, they're all given in Greek in the plural, and they refer to actions. And then the last six are all given in Greek in singular form, and they refer to attitudes.

[33 : 11] And we're not going to spend a lot of time on this, but I at least want to define them, okay? The first one is this, evil thoughts. Now, we usually give ourselves a pass on evil thoughts, don't we? Because they haven't actually worked their way into some type of action, but no, Jesus says this is a part of your defilement.

And it's, to me, as if it were an action. He cares about your thoughts. Because out of the wickedness of our hearts come those evil thoughts, and thus they make us spiritually unclean. You say, well, if evil thoughts is what makes a person unclean, then every person's unclean. Yep. Next, he says sexual immorality.

Remember, these are in the plural form in Greek. That's kind of important here. This is the word pornea. It's from, we get the English word pornography from this. And it's, it's a reference to not a certain sexual sin.

If it was in the singular, he would be referring to a specific sexual sin, but it's in the plural. He's really means sexual immoralities. And he gives this range of wickedness that's in our hearts that could range as far as a sexual act, all the way to just the things that we watch on TV and the way that we entertain ourselves.

[34 : 26] Sexual immorality makes us unclean. Theft and murder are self-explanatory, aren't they? Jesus says they're issues of the heart. In fact, in Matthew five through seven, in the sermon on the Mount, he said, if you just look at another person with hatred in your heart, to me, you're as good as a murderer.

There's no difference. Makes you unclean. Adultery is the next one. Remember plural adulteries is what Jesus means here.

That's sexual sin, specifically in relation to your marriage. It's not singular. He's not just talking about a single act of adultery.

He's talking about a range of adulteries that may include viewing pornography. It could be an affair that you're having with that coworker that not in any way is physical, but it's all emotional right now. That fits. Unclean. How are you going to make yourself clean from that? Coveting. Actions motivated by greed.

[35 : 27] Wickedness is a general term for anything that goes against God's law. So basically Jesus says, and if you want to be smart about it and say, you got all these things taken care of, let me just say every evil thing is related to this.

And then there's the attitudes. This gets us too, doesn't it? Deceit. Is it any form of lying? Sensuality is this unbridled lust of the mind.

It's having a filthy mind that's constantly thinking of filthy things. Envy is interesting because in the Greek, it's two words that means evil eye. In other words, this is the person whose attitude, what they see with their eyes is full of hatred, envious, jealous at other people.

Slander is abusive speech toward others. Pride is an attitude of arrogance or superiority.

Foolishness here is a general term for folly. And in the Bible has a range of meanings.

It could refer to great wickedness. It could just refer to just plain stupidity. Jesus says, all of these things, this is what makes you unclean, not your unclean hands.

[36 : 33] And no one denies that these evil things exist in the world, do they? We can see them clearly. Like it's no surprise to us that these things exist because we see it in all of us.

And if we're honest, we understand we can read through that list. And probably every one of these applies to us in some way or another. We begin to think, you know, Jesus, Jesus is right here.

I go to church every Sunday, but man, I'm filthy. I'm filthy. Some people try to resolve this in the wrong ways. They acknowledge the wickedness that is in the world, but they've convinced themselves that like the Pharisees, that they are inherently good.

And that the problem is circumstance like education or environment or bad examples. And so they think that the problem to cure this evil, to make you clean is just to change your environment or to change your examples or to change your education.

But then we look at all of the great places to live and all of the wealthy people with really great education, all the people that had moms and dads that stayed together their whole life.

[37 : 41] and, and, and did everything the right way and served as great examples. They're just as wicked as everybody else. This isn't solved by changing your circumstances.

God says there's only one solution for the center of our hearts. It's a new heart. And that's exactly what he promises.

Ezekiel 36, I will give you a new heart, a new spirit. I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Not because those rules and your obedience actually gets you the new heart. You'll do the rules because you've been given a new heart. Second Corinthians five.

If anyone's in Christ, he's a new creation. All the old things are passed away. Behold, everything has become new. What can wash away my sin?

[38 : 42] What can make me whole again? Nothing. But the blood of Jesus. That's the point. Do you see?

That's the point. Perhaps you're thinking as we close. Okay, I got it. It's not about ritual.

I'm sinful on the inside. I need a new heart. It needs to be made clean. So what can I do to fix it?

That's the problem. Are you hearing me?

Are you hearing me? Please listen. That's the problem. You can't fix it. It's unfixable. You can't do anything. No amount of goodness can clean it.

You'll just keep doing all the bad things. No religious observance can make you clean. This is why Jesus is so necessary.

[39 : 46] This is why he came. If there was a way that we could make ourselves clean, there would have been no reason for Jesus to die on the cross and be raised three days later.

All of that would have been pointless if we could figure this out. It all comes back to Jesus. Without him, we are utterly hopeless.

But because of his death and resurrection, because he fulfilled the law perfectly, because he took our sin on the cross, we now have eternal life through him.

Which immediately begs the question, okay, well, what am I supposed to do about that? If I can't do anything, what good does that information do to me? Do for me? Luke 18.

Would you turn there? Luke 18. This would be a good place for us to wrap it up. Luke 18. Verse 9. [40 : 49] Jesus tells a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector. Luke 18, Verse 9.

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt. Two men went into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee standing by himself prayed, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men, extortioners, unjust adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I tell you, Jesus says, this man went to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.

[42 : 03] The one who humbles himself will be exalted. It's a simple story. You get it. You say, what?

What am I supposed to do with this information? What am I supposed to do about this? You can't do anything but cry for mercy. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

And praise be to God that he is full of mercy. We sing it all the time, don't we? Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more.

Micah 7, 18. Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever but he delights in mercy, steadfast love.

That's his heart. And I think we see it most clearly in Matthew 11. Jesus says, no one can know the Father unless the Son reveals him.

[43 : 16] In other words, you can't know God, you can't be reconciled to God without Jesus doing a work in your life. And then he immediately follows it up with this. This is amazing. He immediately follows it up with this.

He says, so come to me. Come to me. And we started this in verse 14. What's Jesus doing? Gather round. Let me tell you something.

It's important. And we get to Matthew 11. What's he doing? He's saying, only I can give you new life. Only I can make you clean. So come to me. Come to me, all you who are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

What are they burdened by? These laws, these rules, this burden of constantly working for righteousness, but never being able to attain it. He says, forget that.

Come to me, because what I will give you is rest. Take my yoke upon you, he says. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. Come to me and find rest for your soul, Jesus says.

[44 : 22] You say, what do I do? Come to him. Come to him. And he will give you rest. He calls us to this gospel, and he turns no one away who comes to him in faith.

What do you do? Nothing. Receive his grace. Follow him. He does the rest. He does the rest.