



# Mark - Lesson 7B

## Chapter 7:14-23

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- We pick up tonight in the middle of an event in which Jesus is addressing legalism at its core.
  - We mentioned last week that Jesus has been confronted by the religious leaders from Jerusalem – the center of Judaism.
    - This visit was warranted based upon Jesus rejecting the rules of the Mishnah (Pharisaical teaching) – and rightfully so.
    - The Mishnah were sets of rules and laws created by the Pharisees established apart from the written law and were deemed authoritative.
  - This confrontation, as you may recall, was based solely on rules of ritual hand washing.
    - What we discovered was that this custom was only given to priests according to the Mosaic Law for the purpose of being cleansed before the Lord.
    - However, the Pharisees saw fit to include this routine for all Jews as a means of custom before eating a meal.
  - This tradition, established by the Pharisees, served, not as a means of obedience to God, but rather as a means of piety and self-righteousness.
    - Ultimately, because of the Pharisees' establishment as the leaders of that day, they expected the people to “fall in line” to this set tradition.
  - It would be at this point that Jesus would call out these hypocrites for their misleading and legalistic expectations set upon the people – and so He did.
    - Jesus would confront their criticisms with scripture, in which these supposed “experts” should have known but failed to acknowledge.
  - Tonight, we pick up where we left off and that is Jesus transitioning from His confrontation with the Pharisees to His conversation with the crowd and His disciples.
    - If I were to put a tag on tonight's text it would be: “Matters of the Heart”.
    - With that being said, I invite you to open your bibles and focus our attention on Mark 7:14-23.

**Mark 7:14** After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand:

**Mark 7:15** there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

**Mark 7:16** [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”]

**Mark 7:17** When he had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.

**Mark 7:18** And He \*said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him,

**Mark 7:19** because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (Thus He declared all foods clean.)

**Mark 7:20** And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.

**Mark 7:21** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

**Mark 7:22** deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.

**Mark 7:23** All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

- Let's Pray.
- There was a clinical study done in the 1800s known as the Test of Insanity.
  - This was where an individual was placed in a room with a sink, a mop, and a bucket.
    - The sink is stopped up and the water is turned on.
    - Once the door closes, the water begins to flow until it overflows onto the floor.
  - The test showed that the insane person reacted by grabbing the mop and feverishly working to clean the floor.
    - All of this happening as the water continues to spill over the sides of the sink.
  - The test ends and they would send a sane person into the same room.
    - The same test commences with the same set up.
    - However, this time the sane person goes over to the sink, turns off the water, and begins to mop the floor.
  - If we were to be honest, you may know someone today that finds themselves in a similar situation as the insane person from the first test.
    - Trying to feverishly satisfy or appease God through constant action or works to be deemed “right with God”, but they are never willing to address the root issue – sin itself.
    - We will address the surface needs but fail to get to the core problem and seek the One source who can completely make us whole.
  - In our study tonight, we will find Jesus addressing both the crowd and His disciples regarding what truly defiles humanity at the core.
    - And it will be to the surprise of most that the issue is not what is outside of them, but rather what is inside.
    - Pick me up at verses 14-16 of Mark 7.

**Mark 7:14** After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand:

**Mark 7:15** there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

**Mark 7:16** [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

- After dealing with the confrontation of the religious leaders, Jesus gathers the crowd that has made their way around Him to bring clarity to the conversation.
  - Jesus speaks here in parable as He does in His typical teaching settings and further explains the defilement of men.

- **He states that man is not defiled by what goes inside Him, but rather, man is defiled by what proceeds from inside him.**
- It is here that Jesus will begin to use dietary restrictions as an example to explain that what goes inside our mouths is not the problem.
  - In other words, what you eat and consume physically does not have any bearings on your moral or ethical output.
  - Food goes into our bodies, having no impact on our spirit – it will pass through our bodies to be disposed.
- The question on the table that arises is: **What exactly is it that naturally proceeds from our mouths that defiles us?**
  - It becomes clear that with Jesus speaking in parable, that His focus is not necessarily on things that we speak, per se. (Matthew 12:34 – out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks)
  - There seems to be something prompting and causing these external actions.
- **Jesus here is speaking about the very source of what motivates what we say, think and do – which leads to our external actions.**
  - We ended our time in our last teaching discussing the fact that the motives of the Pharisees were centered on evil intent. (Their man-made traditions)
  - As a matter of fact, Jesus uses the example of one honoring their parents and how the religious leaders used Corban as a means to escape obeying the 4th commandment.
- It became apparent that the Pharisees' legalistic and self-righteous approach to the Law and towards God's people was rooted in a darkened and wicked heart.
  - So Jesus is insisting, if you will, that those who are in the crowd truly hear what He is saying and to understand this truth.
  - What truth you ask?: The truth that it is not the things we do externally that make us right with God.
  - It's not the number of times we wash our hands or the types of foods we eat that makes us right with God.
  - And what we will see later is, it's not even our religion, heritage, or traditions that make us clean.
- Well this begs the question, most especially for the crowd that is in attendance.
  - This question is one that the disciples themselves will be asking as they ponder on the parable that Jesus has shared.
- Here's two questions to consider: **If what is outside of us or the things that we do, don't make us Holy, then what is the root cause of defilement?**
- **Secondly what, or better yet WHO can make us clean, inwardly?**
  - **Know that Jesus is pointing to the reality that what truly corrupts and defiles every human being from within, naturally, is sin.**
  - Secondly, what Jesus is pointing to is the reality that we need to be made right from the inside – out. (We will see how soon).
- **Friends, sin is not what is happening to us externally, but rather, it is the thing that is happening in us.**

- Psalm 51:5 tells us this:

**Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.**

- Our very nature when we enter this world is completely marred by sin. We are naturally born into iniquity.
  - Sin seeks every opportunity to corrupt us to the point that it takes over us, completely.
  - And in a way this is what tradition was doing to the people.
  - As we mentioned last week, the point of the Law was to establish the reality that we naturally cannot keep that which is Holy apart from God Himself making us Holy.
    - This is why the Hebrew writer tells us in Hebrews 10:1:

**Hebrews 10:1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.**

- So it begins to make sense why Jesus is stressing the fact that the people needed to *akouo* or “to listen with intention”, especially His disciples.
  - As Jesus is teaching, He is ultimately revealing more truth regarding the Kingdom Program.
  - The people’s understanding of holiness and cleanliness, for too long, have been misguided due to the traditions of men therefore the heart of the Law was missed.
    - This is why the people needed a shepherd to guide them in the truth of God and His instructions and teachings.
    - And Mark’s account is speaking to the reality that it is Christ who is the one that guides us into this truth.
  - We will see, as we move throughout the gospel of Mark, that there is this progressive movement towards more revelation of who Christ is and why He came.
    - **Jesus is showing that true righteousness is not based upon our merit or traditions, but rather His own righteousness and truth!**
    - Unfortunately, because of the misguided teaching from the religious leaders and leadership complex of that day, it becomes apparent that Jesus’ own disciples will exhibit confusion to the ritual cleansing, dietary concerns and matters of the heart.
  - Now before we move on, you may notice an asterisk or brackets surrounding **verse 16** where it mentions:
    - **“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”**
  - This statement is not found in the original manuscripts and is said to have been written later through scribal addition.

- It could be assumed that this quote was added to simply reinforce what Christ would say before or after He started a parable.
- We also know that after Jesus teaches the crowds He faithfully followed up by explaining the teaching to His disciples.
- Therefore, it seems that this statement holds true to Jesus' methodology of teaching as He will explain this parable to this confused group of men in the next few verses.
  - Check out verses 17-23.

**Mark 7:17** When he had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.

**Mark 7:18** And He \*said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him,

**Mark 7:19** because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)

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- Mark tells us in **verse 17** that once Jesus left the crowd and entered the house that His disciples questioned Him about the parable.
  - Notice, the sudden shift in scenery here.
    - The scene moves from a more public forum to a more private setting – Jesus enters into a home.
    - Now, who's home? The text doesn't give us that information, but we can assume it is potentially located in Capernaum – Jesus' ministry headquarters.
  - It will be behind closed doors, amongst the chosen insiders, that Jesus will further explain the parable to the disciples thereby revealing more about the Kingdom Program.
    - However, notice that Jesus' explanation of the parable does not come without great concern.
    - Where there should be growth in understanding, there seems to be setbacks of confusion and lack of understanding from the disciples.
  - Within Matthew's account we see that the disciple who poses this question is none other than Peter.
    - One question that could be raised is, again: Why does Mark omit Peter's raised question from his account, yet Matthew includes it in his?
    - Some could speculate that, perhaps, Peter doesn't want the reader to know

he asked the question.

- Or it could be that Mark did not want to detract from Jesus' point because of Peter's internal struggle with this particular dietary example.
- Whatever the case may be, the fact that Peter raises the question, and it is documented in Matthew's gospel brings about some key things to consider.
  - With Jesus using dietary restrictions as an example it could be seen that what He was saying publicly was considered revolutionary at best.
  - These men could not wrap their minds around the fact that what they had been taught or heard before regarding unclean foods (Leviticus 11,15) was now seemingly contrary to what Jesus was teaching about foods being clean.
- In other words, Jesus' point and intent of explaining what goes into the mouth doesn't defile you was Him explaining the heart or intent of the Law.
  - **The focus was that "things" are not what makes us unclean. Rather it is our defiled hearts that naturally make us unclean.**
- This would begin to bring into focus Peter's ongoing issues of dietary restrictions and deeming things clean and unclean.
  - **Friends, these items which distinguished the very identity of Jewish culture and heritage from "other" nations was going to be a hard pill to swallow.**
  - But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, let's put a pin here as we will return back to this very point later on.
- It is in **verses 18a** that Jesus restates the point again that is clearly being missed by His disciples.
  - But it will be in verses 19-23 that Jesus provides the "meat of the point" if you will – all pun intended.
- Jesus explains to the disciples that sin is not a physical problem in the sense of what we do.
  - **Rather, Jesus demonstrates that sin is a spiritual problem as it relates to "who we are".**
- **He makes it plain that the mechanism in which naturally governs our mind, will, and emotions, is the heart.**
  - The heart, according to scripture, is the hub by which what we say, do, think, act out etc., flows out of.
- What goes in us physically cannot change our spiritual condition.
  - In other words, things that we do such as external appeasements or religious rituals and restrictions, or mantras cannot cleanse us from the sin that corrupts our very core.
  - This is why Jesus declares in verse 19b "all foods are clean"!
  - **Friends, this reality would have been a huge conundrum for a Jewish hearer, and it seemed to have been a struggle for our beloved Peter.**
- Now before we begin to rush towards judgement at Peter's failed attempt to realize what Jesus was teaching them; **we must observe our constant need for grace and growth, as well, in Christ.**
  - We can oftentimes rush to judgment without realizing that we miss the lesson

time and time again too, and have to be instructed and corrected by the Holy Spirit.

- This, yet again, shows us Jesus' patience towards those who He calls and His commitment to teaching towards full understanding.
  - Now, quickly, I want to go back to an earlier point we paused at regarding Peter and his disposition with the dietary restrictions and the like.
  - Looking at this will help to explain several things:
    - 1. Jesus' unfolding of the Kingdom Program.
    - 2. Bring clarity to the confusion of the disciples.
    - 3. The importance of His Person (Being Messiah)
  - The question that we should be asking at this point is: **What was Jesus alluding to in speaking so candidly about something so sacred to the Jewish people?** (Jewish Dietary Laws in Leviticus 11 and 15)
  - I would like to show us in Acts 10 how, years later, Peter is led to fully understand, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, what Jesus was speaking to in Mark 7:19 regarding the statement **"all food is clean"**.
- Check out how God is committed to leading Peter into truth by the leading of the Spirit.
  - Turn with me to Acts 10:9-19.

**Acts 10:9** On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

**Acts 10:10** But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance;

**Acts 10:11** and he \*saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,

**Acts 10:12** and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.

**Acts 10:13** A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"

**Acts 10:14** But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."

**Acts 10:15** Again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."

**Acts 10:16** This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

**Acts 10:17** Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate;

**Acts 10:18** and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

- So Peter, as he is hungry, has this vision, and in it he sees this sheet of food coming from the sky.



- The only problem is that the food presented before him by God is food that Peter deems “unclean” – sound familiar.
- It’s in this vision that God emphatically says, “What God has cleansed no longer consider unholy”.
- And what does Jesus say in Mark 7:19b “all food is clean”.
- The reality was Peter was **still** struggling with this sense of abandoning Jewish dietary law. This was essentially a “Jewish thing”.
  - And now he is faced with God telling him to consider these foods, normally Gentile, normally deemed “unclean” foods, as clean.
- Well it's after this vision that Peter is met by some men sent from a man named Cornelius, who is a Gentile.
  - It would be these men who will escort Peter to Cornelius’ house as God was about to do something quite “untraditional” in the eyes of the Jew.
  - Luke records these words in Acts 10:28-29.

**Acts 10:28** And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

**Acts 10:29** That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me.”

- What’s so encouraging is that Peter, being led by the Holy Spirit, will see for Himself what God was doing all along.
  - God will confront Peter with his traditions that are getting in the way of the truth of what God, redemptively is doing, according to His promise long ago.
  - Check out Acts 10:34-35.

**Acts 10:34** Opening his mouth, Peter said:

**“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,**

**Acts 10:35** **but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.**

- It would be after Peter presents the Gospel to Cornelius and His family (Gentiles), that Peter sees for himself that God makes men and women clean.
  - **This realization comes only through and by the Holy Spirit bringing about illumination and conviction by the truth of God’s word!**
  - Why do I mention this?
    - Because if the heart is naturally sinful, then it takes the Holy Spirit to rejuvenate and make men and women clean.
    - Apart from the working of the Holy Spirit, men and women remain in sin and dead in their trespasses and in their traditions.
  - **Jesus is ultimately foreshadowing the extent by which and to whom the Gospel**

**was going to and His disciples would need to rely solely upon the teachings of Christ and not their familiar traditions.**

- We cannot rely on man-made traditions, born of a wicked heart because it will mar the authority of God's word and His leading.
- And friends, this struggle of our sin nature and our spirit man is an ever-internal battle.
- Paul recognized this internal struggle. It is this wrestling between our Spirit and our flesh.
  - Check out what Paul says about this internal conflict in Romans 7:21-25.

**Romans 7:21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.**

**Romans 7:22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,**

**Romans 7:23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.**

**Romans 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?**

**Romans 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.**

- The things in which we do, naturally, apart from the Spirit is the result of the evil nature of our hearts.
  - This is why behavioral modification is not a cure to the issue of sin.
  - This is why ceremonial regulations and rituals cannot cleanse us from sin.
  - This is why attending church week after week cannot make you righteous in the sight of the Lord.
  - No matter how many memory verses you memorize, the routine of looking godly and acting godly are a measly attempt to be made right with God.
  - Without the Holy Spirit convicting of sin and illuminating our hearts to Christ and His work, we would all remain forever trapped and bound by sin – forever slaves to our desires and bound for hell.
    - **This is why Christ's atoning and justifying work is enough because He alone cleanses us and makes us right before God.**
  - Check out what David said regarding his own sin nature and struggle in Psalm 51:2-4

**Psalm 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity  
And cleanse me from my sin.**

**Psalm 51:3 For I know my transgressions,  
And my sin is ever before me.**

**Psalm 51:4 Against You, You only, I have sinned**

**And done what is evil in Your sight,  
So that You are justified when You speak  
And blameless when You judge.**

- David, who scripture tells us was a man after God's own heart was in constant dealings with his sin – as are we.
  - David was well aware of his shortcomings and struggle with sin – as should we.
  - And we are well aware of personal moments in David's life that he fell into sin – as will we.
    - Understand that this wrestling with our sin-nature is not a one and done thing.
  - **The wrestling with sin in our lives is an ongoing battle.**
    - As a matter of fact, Moses writes in Genesis 6:5 this regarding sin's incessant behavior:

**Genesis 6:5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

- Therefore, the only way in which men and women can overcome the power of sin in life is through the atoning work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - **A question that one could ask here is: If all of humanity has this inherent nature of sin, where did it come from?**
  - Well we need look no further than Genesis 3 where we see the fall of humanity begin in the garden of Eden by Adam and Eve.
  - Paul provides a beautiful discourse that speaks to this continual pillaging of sin. Turn with me to Romans 5:15-17

**Romans 5:15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.**

**Romans 5:16 The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.**

**Romans 5:17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.**

- Friends, this is why Jesus' being born of a virgin and conceived by the Holy Spirit is necessary.
  - Because Christ was not the son of Adam, He did not take on the inherent sinful nature that we have.
  - Christ being born of the Spirit and not of sin allows all who come through Him to

experience the newness of life!

- Those who are born again through faith in Christ are new creatures and are given the Holy Spirit to indwell us in these earthly bodies.
- This is why Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:22:

**1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.**

- Understanding this reality, which we now have in full view in Christ, is what Jesus is ultimately explaining to the disciples then.
  - Our measly attempts at “being good” will never meet the standard that God has established.
  - The gift of God is that He provided the standard for us in the person of His Son and belief in Christ alone saves us.
  - Now before we end tonight, I want us to look at the last 3 verses, verses 21-23 again, because there is some theological components to observe.

**Mark 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,**

**Mark 7:22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.**

**Mark 7:23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”**

- It is here in the last three verses that Jesus lists out, plainly, both the actions and attitudes which originate from the heart of men.
  - The first 6 are the evil actions of men which proceed from the thoughts of men. They are the following:
    - Fornication
    - Theft
    - Murder
    - Adultery
    - Deeds of Coveting
    - Wickedness
  - If you notice, all 6 actions are in the plural which suggest that these are repeated acts.
    - The last 6 will be in the singular and speak to the attitudes produced from the evil thoughts.
  - These attitudes are the following:
    - Deceit
    - Sensuality
    - Envy
    - Slander

- Pride
- Foolishness
- Jesus shows us that sin begins in our hearts, moves to our thoughts, which leads to our actions.
  - The question in which the text brings us to tonight is: If this is the heart of an unregenerated individual, what are the actions/fruit of someone filled with the Spirit of God.
  - Well Paul expresses that to us in his letter to the Galatians in Galatians 5:19-23. Check out the text:

**Galatians 5:19** Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

**Galatians 5:20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

**Galatians 5:21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Galatians 5:23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- Friends, only a new heart renewed in Christ, can move one from unsaved to saved.
  - Only a regenerated heart can cause one's dispositions to move from the need to please God to resting in being Justified through the Son.
  - Only one who has experienced the rebirth through faith in Christ alone by faith alone, can experience this newness of life.
  - And this newness of life can only be found through Christ who is our sin bearer.
  - Our striving and attempts at doing to look good or be right before God are unsatisfactory at best.
  - The only way that our hearts are made clean is through and by Christ's atoning work.
    - As David stated in the Psalms (51:10) "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit in me".
  - Our striving to accomplish a work that has already been fully completed in Christ is not only unnecessary but is quite insane in and of itself.
    - Why you may ask? Because the work of perfect righteousness, perfect Holiness, perfect obedience to the Law, has been fully completed in Christ.
  - It is in Christ that we are truly made new from the inside out!
    - The root issue is sin, but the perfect solution is Christ!
    - Let's Pray.