

Mark 7_14-23 Final
The Gospel of Mark
Sunday Morning

7.1.18

INTRO

A little over a year ago I started to notice that if I sat **down in a chair** in a certain way I'd start to lose feeling in my leg.

But, it didn't go away after a number of months so I did the **worst possible thing** to do when you want to know what your **symptoms** might be...I **Googled** the symptoms and checked **Web MD**.

It turns out that my WebMD diagnosis was either a **stroke** or some sort of **artery disease** or maybe even a **tumor**.

WebMD always **gives you the worst possible** scenario for your **diagnosis** but most of the time it's not nearly as bad as they say it is.

But, in our passage this morning from Mark chapter 7, Jesus gives us a **diagnosis** that is also the **worst possible scenario** but in this case, it is as bad **as he says it is**.

Jesus confirms that we have a **sickness** that you and I know all too well. Christians call it sin, and if you're not a Christian then think of it as rebellion and wrongdoing against God.

I say we know it well because it's inside of us and we feel its effects still to this day and it **can't be removed**. It is part of our being and isn't curable by **medicine** and we can't **simple wash it** out with soap and water. It is **pervasive** and left alone **will destroy us**.

You and I woke up this morning with this **sickness of heart clinging** to us still, living inside us, acting in **opposition to God**...and as we'll see this **morning, defiling** us.

But, Christian, as you and I **know there is hope**.

This morning isn't **anything new because** it's the foundation of why you and I know we **need a Savior** but my hope this morning is that you'll find a **new motivation** to think each day about the reality of what we're **going to see this morning**.

And in a sentence, here's what we'll see: **Jesus is the only medicine that can cure you of this worst possible diagnosis**.

And my prayer is that you will have a **renewed desire** to think each day about this reality and as you do: **daily** and **renewed joy** would follow, and **daily efforts for holiness** should follow, and people you interact with at your **mailboxes, neighborhood coffee shops, or workspaces** will come to **understand more of Jesus**.

Here's where we're going:

- Read the text
- Unpack it's truths
- Apply it to our lives

This is the Word of the Lord to us this morning:

[14] And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: [15] 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." [17] And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. [18] And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, [19] since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) [20] And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. [21] For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, [22] coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. [23] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

We see in verse 14 that Jesus calls the people to **him again** (as he's been doing in Mark) and calls them to **hear** and **understand**. And what he tells **them is a parable**.

Now, the reason he does this is because he was **asked a question by the Pharisees and scribes** all the way back in **verse 5**. Look back there with me, they asked him:

[5] Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?

As Rich talked about this last week, before answering this question about eating and defiling, Jesus rails against them for asking this question because he saw their **hypocrisy** and practice of, in Jesus' mind, **empty religion**.

But he does answer the question beginning in verse 14.

But before we get to his answer let's make sure we all **understand** the **question**.

The question is actually a veiled **indictment of the disciples** disguised as an **honest question**.

And here's why, Mark has already told us that the leaders of Judaism had been creating and passing down **oral traditions** and **rules** meant to keep the people of God from even coming close to breaking the food regulations found in the **Law of Moses**.

Look back at 7:3-4

[3] (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, [4] and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)

The food regulation of the Law can be read in **Leviticus 11** and they point to what **foods** could and **couldn't be eaten**. They talk about **foods** that **defile** and make you unclean.

But none of the food regulations discuss washing hands. The **washing hands** part was an **oral tradition** that they were taking as **Law**.

And they **Synagogue leaders** wanted to understand why **Jesus' disciples** weren't following these **oral traditions and rules** and **defiling** themselves by not washing their hands before **they ate food**.

Again, the question from verse 5:

*[5] Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with **defiled** hands?*

Notice the word "defile". This means to make **unclean, impure, or profane**. This is a key word because Jesus will use it 5 times in our text for this morning. **"Why are they defiling themselves?"**

Jesus answers them in a **parable**. Look with me at his answer in verse 14:

"Hear me, all of you, and understand: [15] 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."

He brings up the defilement language again and tells the people what defiles **dwells within** and **not without**.

We see in **verse 17** that the **disciples** don't get it, perhaps they assume that this is a **"restroom parable"**, which isn't without **merit** if you look at **what Jesus says**.

But they go into the house and ask him what he meant by the parable. And Jesus is a little concerned that they still don't understand, not for the last time.

And he explains what he means in verses 18ff. And here, church, we see the all too **familiar diagnosis of our problem**:

[18] Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, [19] since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?...

*[20] And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. [21] For from within, out of the **heart of man**, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, [22] coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. [23] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."*

In short, **defilement, impurity, uncleanness is a heart problem and not a stomach problem**. Sin, rebellion against God, dwells in the hearts of every person and is unavoidable.

And to be clear, when Jesus **says heart**, he doesn't mean the physical **beating heart**. It is shorthand for our being, who we are inside.

Who we are inside is sick with sin and rebellion. And that is what defiles us, not food. We can be tempted to hear this and think, "**Yeah, Yeah, I've heard this before.**" Let this sink in one more time, this **diagnosis** is **damning** because it's one thing to be able to manage what you **can touch and clean on your hands** or what you can **avoid to put into your stomach**. That's **manageable**, it's **doable**.

But what do you do when the thing that **is the problem** is a **part of you** and you can't **avoid it** or **manage it**?

The **diagnosis**, according to **Jesus in Mark 7**, is that every one of us is **defiled** from the **inside out**. **Evil things** dwell within us, and we can't do **anything about it**.

And if you're like me, it still **clings to me**. I feel it often.

1 week **old Abby** and the **bassinet**, I was so angry and selfish that I got up and pushed the bassinet out of the room and closed the door.

I didn't need to think about that, it just came out.

- Or **jealousy** with friends
- Or **desires** to open the computer or your phone
- Or **angry words** you say that just come out when hammer and thumb make contact
- Etc...

This is in the **heart** of **every man** and **woman**. The diagnosis from Jesus is **that we are defiled from the inside out**.

This is the **diagnosis**, it can't get **worse**.

WE can't do anything about it. But, there is **hope**, BECAUSE JESUS CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

Two things I want to draw our attention to:

1. Verse 19: **Jesus declares all foods clean**

You may have noticed that I skipped over **Mark's side comment** at the end of **verse 19**. Mark rarely enters the **picture in the gospel**, he leaves his own **comments out mostly** but when he adds his voice to the narrative, **we should listen**.

He wants the readers, especially in the **first century church**, to understand the **implication here**.

Jesus is saying that all the food laws from **Leviticus 11 were now obsolete**. He declares **all foods to be clean, non-defiling**.

Now this is key for us on the one hand because we can eat **bacon with confidence**.

But on the other hand, and more importantly, only God can do what Jesus had just done. Only the Lawgiver can change the Law.

It's almost as if Jesus is saying, "Okay, Pharisees and scribes, you're hung up on these food laws, let's get rid of them."

Jesus alone has the **authority, power, and wisdom** to roll back the food laws from Leviticus 11 and declare that foods once deemed **unclean** are **now clean**. Foods that **once defiled** are **now holy**.

He had come **bringing the Kingdom of God** near to everyone, and he had come to fulfill the Law, and this is one more example of both.

And here's where our hope shines through in this text because if Jesus has the **authority, and power, and wisdom** to makes foods transform from defiled to clean, **perhaps he can do the same with hearts that are defiled as well**.

2. **Mark 1:1**

And if you're a **Christian**, you know that this is **exactly what he does**.

Let's remember that **Mark 7** flows from **Mark 1** where we read in chapter 1 verse 1:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We find ourselves progressing in **this gospel story, the good news** about the **cure** from this **diagnosis** of a **sick and defiled heart**. Jesus is marching to Jerusalem where **he'll be nailed to a cross**, taking the **sickness** of our **hearts** with him, and he'll **forgive** and renew **the hearts** of those **who trust in him**.

And church, when he **rose from the dead**, he declared for all of us who put our trust in him that **the sickness of our hearts** and the **defilement** that is found there has been **overthrown** so that you and I no longer have to **obey** the desires of our **hearts** but have been **given a new master** and **friend** in Jesus and in him we find hope and cleansing.

This is the gospel!

Christian, you know as well as I do that **your heart**, though it still feels the **effects** of **sin**, has been **cured by Jesus once for all**. We once had **no power to cure** the sickness of our **hearts that defiled us**; now we do. When you and I live our lives seeking to obey Jesus, we do so because he has given us a **renewed heart**. To put it like Paul does, **we aren't slaves to the sickness of sin anymore**, we **now** have been tethered to Jesus and in Him we find new life.

And if you're not a Christian, listen, thank you for **being here today**. I hope you aren't offended by what I've said because I've been telling you that you **have a serious problem**. And that problem of a sick and **defiled being is something you can't fix**. All of those times that you've **regretted life decisions** that you've done in **anger**, or **selfishness**, or **hopelessness**, or **despair** can't be fixed by self-will.

But they can be fixed by **the Jesus found in the Bible**. Listen, he wants to cure your sick **heart**, will you let him?

Church, do we love the gospel?

I wonder what would happen if you and I lived **intentionally each day remembering** and finding renewed gratefulness in the truth of Jesus fixing our sick hearts both in our minds/hearts and on our lips? I came up with three things:

1. We would increasingly become the happiest and most joyful people

What do we have **to be unhappy about**? The worst possible diagnosis that we could ever have has been cured by Jesus. We don't live in despair or hopelessness, but in joy. This must mean something to us.

If we woke up each day remembering this truth, I don't think the most **Eeyore-ish** person could be that **Eeyore-ish** any longer.

Are you unhappy? Are you **joyless** and in **despair**? **Run to Christ**. Find joy in him again or perhaps for the first time.

2. We would be increasingly become more holy, living to be like Jesus

You know the feeling of being really sick and can't get out of bed. You have a fever or something and you feel like dying? What happens when you realize you're better? You get up and wish that you never had to be like that again.

When you realize that you don't have to be **bed-ridden** in the **sickness** of your diagnosis any more, but can enjoy the freedom of running outside and seeing the beauty of the world around you and enjoy its pleasures, why wouldn't we do it.

The sickness of sin has been cured by Christ so that we might enjoy new life in Him. This means that we are working to be more like Jesus each day. This is holiness and growth as a Christian.

Be holy.

3. We would increasingly become Community Rescuers, shouting Jesus everywhere

What the world around us needs the most is a cure for the **hopelessness of sin**. We have it.

When you go to the **mailbox**, if you are freshly **grateful** for the joy of Jesus, tell them. It's what they need.

The **neighborhoods around us need it**. Places to go are means to tell. One of the reasons for the **coffee area in the back is to make** a place where people in our **communities** can come and hear this good news.

Living on mission for Jesus means being proclaimers. Telling people about the hope of Christ. Will we do it!

Maybe you're wondering if you should serve, maybe your area of serving should be leading a new small group with the express purpose of reaching your neighborhood. Growing together as a group by talking often about the cure of your sickness and making sure your neighbors hear it too.

Jesus is the only medicine that can cure you of this worst possible diagnosis of sin.

Pray

BENEDICTION:

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

[16] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, [17] comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. (ESV)