

These Things Come from Within, and They Defile the Man; Mark 7:14-23
0429-0432

The following transcript has been electronically transcribed. Any errors in spelling, syntax, or grammar should be attributed to the electronic method of transcription and its inherent limitations.

And he called the people to him again and said to them, hear me, all of you, and understand there's nothing outside a person that is going into him that can defile him. But the things that come out of a person are what defile him. And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable.

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? Since it enters not his heart, but his stomach, and is expelled. Thus he declared all foods clean. 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, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and they defile a person. So as we move today from the previous passage ending there in verse 13, we recall just where we are in the whole context of Jesus's ministry here.

The scene there, Gennesaret, is just recently behind us and right before that was, of course, that unforgettable night on the sea. The night of the wind and the waves, Jesus prays all night and then he comes to the disciples walking on the water in the greatest theophany of Mark's gospel so far. This theophany, this declaring, this revealing, this showing himself to be God.

Three ways he comes to show himself to be God. He treads on the water in the Old Testament imagery. of the God who puts the water under his feet. He meant to pass them by, Mark, using the distinctive Old Testament language that denotes a revealing, a showing of God to his people in a particular occasion, in a particular moment.

And then thirdly, he says to them as he comes to the boat, to take courage, have heart, I am, I am, in that distinctive phrase that speaks to us of the covenant name of Yahweh. The next morning, they come to the shore at Gennesaret and in that short episode in Mark's Gospel, which was really several weeks long, most likely, this episode in which Gennesaret is portrayed to us as the picture of faith, the stark opposite, the polar opposite of Nazareth, that was the picture of unbelief, where Nazareth, nobody believed anything about him, much less that he could heal or anything like that.

Here in Gennesaret, they believed at least that he was able to heal, and so in their belief they are bringing the sick to him. And they're bringing them and putting them in the marketplaces and Jesus is healing by the hundreds and even perhaps by the thousands. And so this period here in Gennesaret in which so much healing and so much belief is taking place, at least belief that he's able to heal, perhaps even, Some believe more than that, but in this period, this Gennesaret period, this, of course, brings the interest of the Pharisees and the scribes once again, they make yet another trip up from Jerusalem in order to investigate because they have sworn to put him to death, and they have confided with the Herodians and conspired together to put him to death, and they are just seeking reason to do so.

And so hearing of what's going on there, they make another trip up, they hear, they witness actually his disciples not to Ritually, ceremonially, watching, washing their hands prior to eating. Of course, Jesus is in the marketplace, touching and moving among all kinds of people. And these things are a violation, not of the law of God, but of the traditions that they have established.

And so these scribes as we saw last week, stand for us as examples of those who have a low opinion of Scripture, a low opinion of the commandments of God, although they are masquerading as those who have the highest of opinions of God's Word. So pretending to be the protectors and those who make their living, so to speak, as the scribes in the commandments of God, in the law of God, they nonetheless have a very deficient and very low view of the scriptures, because first of all, they, they see the scriptures as something that needs them to clarify and explain the scriptures to God's people.

They deny the doctrine of the clarity of scripture. And then not only that, but they also deny the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture that God's commands and God's Word is not enough for people, for his people. Instead, they need them to help and to add their commandments along with it in order to make God's Word and God's commands sufficient for God's people.

And so having such a low view of Scripture, Jesus then declares to them as they come and they ask Jesus this very imposing question, Why are your disciples not... Washing their hands. Nothing to do, of course, with hygiene, but why are they not following the ceremonial rituals, the commandments of the scribes and the Pharisees and the rabbis?

And Jesus answers by saying, well written was Isaiah's words of you, for he wrote this about you. He wrote that your hearts are far from me, though your lips may honor me, your hearts are far from me, because you make into doctrine the commandments of men. And though your hearts are so far from me, you and your hypocrisy are far from me, though your lips proclaim to know me and honor me and praise me, your hearts are very far from me.

So declaring them to be Of such hearts that are so cold to him, he goes on to declare to all of us as we read the passage, he goes on to show us how not only do they have a low view of God's word, but they have a view of God's word that that would make it in their hearts. That's completely unauthoritative, though they want to portray themselves as having this dual authority, the authority of God's Word, along with their traditions.

Jesus very plainly tells us no such thing can exist. God's Word cannot exist in a co authority. Because when you have accepted the authority of your traditions and your regulations, you have in effect nullified the commandments of God. He says so three times in words and language very clear. You have nullified, you have cancelled, you have declawed, you have dehorned, you have made void the Word of God in order to grasp and seize and hold upon your own traditions and your own regulations. So in effect, you have declared the Word, the commandments of God to be null and void because you wanted instead your traditions. And so declaring such things to them, that now leads us into the passage that begins in verse 14.

Now, pardon me, it's a passage last week. Could be described as a passage describing true heart worship or true worship. Then the passage this week could be described as describing true defilement, true worship, followed by a passage that teaches us of true. Defilement. So beginning here in verse 14, we begin reading by these words.

And he called the people to him again and said to them, so in my mind, I picture this scene here in Gennesaret as the scribes come. Jesus is always surrounded by a crowd of people. We've seen that since chapter one of Mark's gospel. Jesus is never alone unless he goes to extreme efforts. Gets up before the sun comes up, goes to a mountain all night by himself to pray.

Those are the only occasions that Jesus is alone. The rest of the time, Jesus is mobbed by a group of people, by flocks and, and crowds of people. So the picture that I have here is Jesus is being crowded around by the people. He's healing, he's teaching, he's instructing, and into this crowd come these scribes to make their accusations to Jesus.

Jesus, why do your disciples not follow the traditions of our fathers, of our elders? And Jesus then has that interchange with them, that conflict with them. And after that, I picture that the crowd that's around Jesus sort of backs up, as these scribes and these Pharisees are here and they're accusing Jesus in His face, and there's this back and forth there.

And as all this is taking place, the crowd is... Maybe they take a step or two back, and they're listening, and they're watching along. And then the interchange between the scribes and the Pharisees and Jesus comes to an end, as Jesus declares to them that you are the hypocrites who have such a deficient view of God's Word.

Now, at the conclusion of that, maybe the scribes once again are now, the scribes and the Pharisees are once again left Speechless as they so often are. If you've ever noticed in the gospel accounts how often Jesus's critics are left Speechless without an answer to give to him. And so perhaps at the end of that exchange the scribes are again left Speechless they don't know what to say and being speechless They then maybe slink away or they withdraw into the crowd and after doing so then Jesus maybe Looks around looks at those who have been watching and listening in on this exchange And then he calls them back into himself.

So he called the people, the crowd, back into him again. And calling them back into them, to him, the, after the scribes have left, he calls them back into himself. He says to them, hear me, all of you, and understand this. So in picking up here, We pick up here at a moment in the story in which it's really, I think, helpful to go back and remind ourself just of last week and just of the lessons that we saw from last week.

As Jesus dismisses, so to speak, these scribes and these Pharisees by declaring to them their own hypocrisy and they perhaps then leave on that note. One of the things that is not present in Mark's account that is present in Matthew's account is, but in Matthew's account between verses 13 and 14, the corresponding in Mark's account, Matthew adds these three verses of explanation.

So Jesus has the interchange with the scribes and the Pharisees, and they perhaps leave, and then verse 12 of Matthew 15, we read these words. Then the disciples came and said to him, prior to Jesus calling the crowd back, then the disciples came and said to Jesus, do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?

So the disciples, they're watching on and they're listening in on this, and then the scribes and the Pharisees, they leave in sort of a huff, and the disciples pick up on the fact that, The scribes and the Pharisees perceived that Jesus had just put them into their place and Jesus was speaking very harshly in his rebuke to them.

And so they say to Jesus, Jesus, did you, do you understand that you just offended them? You deeply offended them. And he answered verse 13, every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit. And then the next verse of Matthew's account.

So Matthew interjects this little explanatory occasion where the disciples come and they say Jesus you really offended them and then they leave in this type of offense and so this shows us something that I think for lack of a better way to put this really just shows us the true character, the true nature of their hearts.

As they are encountering the disciples here, they recognize the disciples are not following their own traditions, the rabbi's traditions, and they confront them on this. Now, the disciples have not violated any of God's law. They were not washing their hands. They were not ceremonially washing their hands.

Before they eat, but God's Word never gave any commandment for the ritual washing of hands prior to eating Except for the priests so those who were not priests there was no commandment of God in all of the Old Testament That spoke to any sort of ritual washing of the hands that should take place before one eats.

So to be clear, the disciples had violated no commandment of God. Indeed, nowhere in all the gospel accounts do any of the disciples or Jesus ever violate a commandment of God. And so not violating a commandment of God, but nonetheless violating a tradition of the elders, they come and they confront Jesus.

And Jesus then says to them, in your hypocrisy. You have put away the commandments of God and clung to your own tradition and now confronting them with this reality of their Their refusal to give the authority to the Word of God and instead giving it to the commandments of God and Confronting with them with them with this and their offense they then leave and now leaving we see something of the nature of their heart because Jesus confronts them with the reality of their heart and Refusing to hear that and refusing to accept that they leave in offense And I think the explanation for this comes to us in John chapter 3 verse 19, and this is the judgment It says Jesus, the light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

And so Jesus, the light comes and he exposes the darkness of the hearts of the scribes and the Pharisees. And having the darkness of their hearts exposed, they are offended. They are angered. They are incensed at Jesus, because Jesus has exposed the darkness of their hearts. Now, Jesus confronts them with the commands, the written word of God.

He says to them, thus it is written by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah wrote well when he wrote this, and this applies to you. And so he confronts them with the written word of God, and instead of hearing that, And being convicted and repenting, they instead dig their heels deeper into the traditions to which they hold.

As Jesus has exposed with the light of the word, He has exposed the darkness of their deeds and the darkness of their hearts, they nevertheless hold more firmly onto the darkness. Which they love in their heart. And this shows us something of the genuine nature of their heart. We read in John chapter 10, verse 27, Jesus says, my sheep hear my voice.

They recognize my voice and they follow me. And this is something that the disciple of Christ can look to himself and see very plainly in their own life. All of us have aspects of our thought patterns, of our attitude, patterns, of our behavior patterns. All of us have things that the word of God addresses in our life.

All of us have, as we talked last week, these traditions that we love and that we hold dear, and sometimes those traditions are good. Sometimes they are neutral. Sometimes they're not so good. But when scripture comes up against those, or when scripture comes up to plainly show to us the wrong of our ways, or the wrong of our thoughts, or the wrong of our heart, then the child of God God hears that, and perhaps not always right away, perhaps it takes some time, but the child of God will always hear the Word, the Word of God, and will always yield to it eventually.

Whereas the one who is not the child of God will, being confronted by God's Word, we'll hear that, but we'll reject it and we'll not yield to it. You know how Mark has focused in his gospel nearly from the beginning upon the contrast between those who hear and yield, those who hear and submit, and those who hear and do not submit.

And here we see, once again, the Pharisees, they have heard the Word of God that Jesus has quoted to them, and they have refused to submit to it, but instead they have grown even harder in their hearts. And this is something that is a powerful indicator of the true nature of our hearts. Every child of God will hear the Word of God when it confronts something in their life, and the child of God will yield to it, although not always right away.

Sometimes it's a process. Sometimes it's a battle with the heart. Sometimes it's a battle with the flesh. But the child of God will hear the word of God and submit to it. And this, in my life, has been a powerful, powerful indicator to me of oftentimes the hearts of men and women. I will never forget one experience many, many, many years ago in which we were in a context in another church, obviously.

And the context of this church was this church had a choir loft. And we're familiar with churches that have a choir loft. And this particular choir loft had fixed pews in the choir loft. And the discussion was taking place about... The pews in the choir loft and how, because the pews were fixed, they weren't allowing the space to be used in another sort of way.

And perhaps if the pews weren't there, they were sort of in the way. And so, so the discussion was centering around these pews in the choir loft. And I, being the pastor, I made a suggestion. I said, what if we took the pews out of the choir loft and replaced them with chairs that could be moved if needed?

And I'll never forget, to my dying day, I'll never forget a leader of the church responding with these words, you will take those choir pews out over my dead body. And he wasn't joking. And so there was this tradition, this beloved tradition. There was neither right or wrong, going back to last week, neither right nor wrong, but it was something held close and held, held dear in the heart of one who was willing to say over my dead body, they'll be removed.

Now that sort of thing is an indicator. Of the true nature, the true character of the heart. I have heard these words come out of people's mouth, and you probably have heard these words too. I have heard out of the mouth of those who profess to be followers of Christ when confronted with

the scripture that would refute some sort of doctrine that they hold or some sort of way of thinking that they hold or way of belief that they hold.

I have heard out of the mouth of those who profess to be Christians. I don't care what the Bible says, this is what I'll continue believing. I've heard those words, and maybe you've heard those words too. And that's just an indicator. Like the Pharisees and scribes, we don't care what Isaiah says. This is what we say.

This is what we believe. And that is the heart that on the surface may pretend to love the Word of God and love the people of God. But deep down is dark. Deep down clings to the authority of man, and deep-down clings to beloved traditions and customs. And when the Word of God perhaps comes against those, then sides are taken definitively and quickly, and sometimes very shockingly.

So this is a key indicator, a helpful indicator for us in our own life. Watch your own life, regard your own life. When the Word of God comes against Thought patterns, attitude patterns, when the Word of God confronts you and what, how you live, or how you believe, or how you treat others, do you yield to the Word?

Is the Word automatically the authority, or in your heart are you willing to say, well, the Word may say that? But that's not what I believe. That's not what I'm going to do. A key indicator for authority here. So he said, he called the people, again, the scribes and Pharisees being dismissed. He called the people to him again and said to them, hear me, all of you, and understand.

So he calls the people to him. And he issues these words, hear me, all of you, and understand. So this reminds me, anyway, of Mark's theme really since the beginning. Mark has had this consistent theme, has he not? The theme of hearing and receiving. Hearing the Word, understanding it, and receiving it. That's been a theme of Mark's from the beginning.

It's a theme that really became prominent in chapter 3 with the parable of the soils. How that parable was so pointedly focused upon the need to... Here and what you do upon hearing it, how does your heart hear and receive the word that you have heard? So he says to them hear me all of you and understand once again a reminder for us that Christianity our faith always has presented itself in scripture as that which is Understandable.

It's logical. It's rational Our faith has never been presented in the scriptures as something that is enigmatic and impossible to understand and illogical or irrational. Instead, it is something that Jesus can say, hear and understand. Your soul depends on this. Your life depends on your hearing and your understanding.

And I'm not speaking in mysteries and riddles. I'm speaking in ways that you can understand. Hear and understand, which tells us once again of just the... The three-step process of salvation for the Christian, the three step process that the Scriptures present to us, always begins with the mind, with the hearing.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So Scripture presents to us that the process begins with the hearing, with the understanding, with the comprehension, which is why preaching on Sunday morning, which is why our gatherings on Wednesday night, We always focus on the comprehension of God's Word because that's where it begins.

Hearing and comprehending, and then step two, the hearing, the mind then goes to the heart, and what the, what the ears hear, what the mind comprehends, going to the heart, changes the heart, and then the third step is the will. The mind to the heart to the will. That's the Christian process. That's the process, process of salvation.

That's the process of sanctification. Begins by hearing and comprehending, from there to the heart. from the heart to the will. So hear me, all of you, and understand. You hear the urgency in his words there. It's as though their souls, their eternity, depends upon hearing and understanding. Hear me, all of you, and understand.

Verse 15. There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him. But the things that come out of a person So there's nothing that can go into a person that can defile him. So let's be careful here to hear what Jesus said in the context that he said it. Because Jesus is using words just like we use words, meaning that Jesus words are very easy, this verse in particular, are very easy to just take this phrase that Jesus said, lift it right off the context, and taking it out of the context, make it appear to say something that Jesus didn't say.

Because Jesus is not saying that in all of human experience there is nothing that can enter into you that can defile you. That's not what Jesus is saying. Jesus is not saying that there's nothing that you can hear. that won't defile you, or there's nothing that you can see that entering into your mind, through your eyes, into your brain, cannot defile you.

He's not saying that there are not ideas that you can hear with your ears and give credence to or hear them uncritically, and by listening to them uncritically and receiving them uncritically, being defiled by them. That's not what Jesus is saying. Jesus is speaking in the context A food being put into the mouth without the washing of hands first, and that food somehow becoming, because it entered the mouth by way of unwashed hands, somehow that food then defiles the person.

That's clearly the context that Jesus is speaking of here. So the scriptures will say to us that, yes, absolutely, there are things that enter into you that can defile you. Paul will say to Peter, he will say, to Peter just beware of getting drawn into these endless genealogies. He says those things are worthless.

Don't let those things enter in. Or as he says to the Colossians, he'll talk about, philosophies being captive by philosophies and empty deceits in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 8. So the scriptures affirm for us that things can enter through our ears, through our eyes, they can enter into our mind, and we can accept them and we can receive them.

Not weighing them against the truth of Scripture. And those things, those ideas, those images, those sounds, those words, they can defile you when you receive them without weighing them against the perspective of Scripture. But Jesus isn't speaking of that. He's speaking of this ridiculous notion that unwashed hands, hands that have not been ceremonially cleansed, can touch food and that food then goes in your mouth and somehow you are then defiled by that.

There's nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him. So the Pharisees, as we know, they had boiled everything down to externals. The Pharisees were all about externals. Which, by the way, Piggybacking on piggybacking. That's a hard word. It's probably not even a right real word, is it? So on the back of what we talked about last week, as we talked about the

traditions of the scribes and Pharisees compared to the commandments of Scripture, you have heard it said compared to it is written.

We talked about that contrast and that comparison, but just to sort of follow up on that, the traditions of men, the regulations, the laws of men are always about what? Externals, the regulations of man are always preoccupied with, consumed with externals. The word of God, the commandments of God are always preoccupied with what?

You might want to say, well, in the Old Testament they were pretty preoccupied with externals, too. But let's just hang on for a second. We have often, I think, fallen into the trap of thinking that the Old Testament, particularly the Bible as a whole, but particularly the Old Testament, is just a book full of so many rules and regulations.

And granted, there are quite a few rules for ancient Israel, civil rules, civil regulations in the Old Testament Scriptures. There are quite a few in there. But let's not lose a perspective sort of sight here, because the reality is that there's actually no comparison at all. You yourself live under far, far more rules and regulations than what are found in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament may have a lot to say about how people observe the Sabbath or how they, how their diet goes or these sorts of things. And that may seem to you, as you read your scriptures, it may seem like, well, these sure are a whole lot of rules and regulations about external things, but in the grand scheme of things, the old covenant people of God, lived under fewer, far fewer external rules than you do.

But even saying that, when we think about the Old Testament regulations of the, of the commandments of God, even then, we really aren't right to say that they were preoccupied with the externals. They addressed a lot of externals, but what was the command? What were the commandments of God always preoccupied with?

They're always concerned with the heart. That's always been the preoccupation. Jeremiah says, circumcised the heart. Or the psalmist David says Psalm 51 created me a clean heart or for Samuel 16. We all know this verse. The Lord doesn't look on the exterior on the outside. The Lord looks upon the heart and many other places we could see this.

God's laws have always been primarily preoccupied with the heart, only secondarily preoccupied with the externals. Man's regulations have always been preoccupied only completely with externals. And so the Pharisees throughout their regulations and their rules, they had become completely consumed with the external only because the external was something that they could easily manipulate and easily control while maintaining a nasty, dirty, filthy heart on the inside.

Yet the outside could be made to look clean and they would appear to other men That's why Jesus will say, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you clean the outside of the cup, but the inside of the cup is like a full of dead men's bones, it's so filthy. But they were preoccupied with the external only.

And lest we look back across 2,000 years of history and say, Oh, those shameful Pharisees, just recognize We live in the exact same world today, under the exact same conditions, living with the exact same fallen hearts today. Our situations may be different. We may focus on different

externals today, but make no mistake that mankind as a whole is preoccupied with externals that make you appear good and righteous and holy and right.

We are consumed with these today. We live in a world today that has, this is beyond debate, we have gone crazy over eco friendliness, haven't we? Environmentalism. We have gone crazy over the idea of caring for the planet, recycling, that sort of thing. Now, is anything wrong with that? No. As stewards of God's creation, we should care for this world that God has created.

But we have now created a world, a society in which If you want to get on the wrong side of your neighbor, just don't put your recycle out. Just let your neighbor know that all your recycle is really going into the trash instead of the recycle. Or we live in a world today in which, you know, you can go down to the Starbucks coffee and, you know, they've got the two trash cans there and the one just tries to shame you by saying, Landfill, as though it needs to say, Landfill.

It's just like, you know, put something in here to your own shame because we'll be watching what you put into the landfill. And then we've just sort of gone way over the top with the whole recycle, care for the earth, care for the environment sort of thing. Have you ever stopped to think? And again, there's nothing wrong with that at all.

But have you ever stopped to think that perhaps the god of this age is thrilled with that? Because that's something that is entirely and completely external that people all around us are feeling good about themselves over. Look how I'm recycling. Look how I'm caring for the planet. Look how I drive an EV.

Look how my carbon footprint is getting smaller. And on and on it could go. That's something that's entirely external. That is an easy way for people who have rotten hearts to feel holier than thou, to feel more righteous than the neighbor. Or let's take our modern western preoccupation with physical fitness.

Anything wrong with physical fitness? Absolutely not. God gave us amazing bodies, we were fearfully and wonderfully made, and it is our duty as stewards of what God has given to us to care for them. And so you sin against God when you abuse your body. But, do we not live in a society in which many in our society today have taken the idea of physical fitness to, really, to make a god out of it?

To make a religion out of it? You may know people. That you could probably rightly say that they worship physical fitness. They worship physical health. Nothing at all wrong with caring for your body in its place. But can you see how that's yet another external? That someone can have a black heart, but yet do certain things on the outside and others can look upon them and say, wow, what a great person.

So the rules and the regulations may have changed. They may have completely done away with any sort of Orthodox Christianity or Orthodox Judaism background, but they're still the same externals. They're still the same thing of saying, let me do this on the outside, while having a heart that I don't really need to address what's wrong with my heart, but I can do these things on the outside, and then think of myself as a good person, and other people can also see me as a good person.

And so this is what Jesus is saying. There's nothing, this exterior thing, there's nothing on the outside that can go in and defile a man, but the things that come out are what defile him. Look at verse 17. By the way, in, unless you're in the King James, look at verse 16. There is no six verse 16 in our modern translations because verse 16 is It's extremely well attested to not be original to Mark.

The King James includes it. I think a couple, like the NASB, I think includes it in brackets. But the verse 16 says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. So, it's, it's almost, it's, It's very, very well attested that that was not original to Mark. So having the high view of Scripture that we hold, if it's not, that's not what Mark wrote, then verse 16 is not found there.

So verse 17, and when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. So they come inside and somebody asked Jesus, we don't know who, who it was. Jesus, can you help us with that parable? Can you explain what, what was that all about? So aren't you glad for the one person?

Maybe it was more than one. Aren't you glad for the one that said, Jesus, can't you imagine them coming into the house and they're all, all the disciples are talking, but wow, that was a great parable, Jesus. You really told them I was, that was some great teaching. And then one of the disciples is like.

Wait a minute. What? What did you mean, Jesus? I didn't I didn't quite get that. You ever been there where really everybody nobody really understood, but there's only one person willing to admit that they didn't understand. So somebody speaks up maybe more than some more than one speak up. They say, you know, Wait a minute.

We just didn't quite get that Jesus. Can you explain it to it? So he, so he leaves the crowd coming into the house. So we see this pattern once again in Mark's gospel. It's a pattern that when Jesus separates himself from the crowd and gets off by himself to the disciples, then more revelation is coming.

More understanding is coming. More teaching is coming. Particularly, you may have noticed this as well, particularly when they enter a house. You may have picked up on that, but when the disciples enter a house with Jesus, There's teaching coming. So he left the crowd and he comes into the house and his disciples asked Jesus We still didn't understand.

Can you help us? Can you can you go back through that again verse 18? And he said to them then are you also without understanding in other words? Are you as dull as the ones outside now? Are you as slow are you as dim witted as the rest of the crowd that you still don't get it either? So that's rather a sharp rebuke On Jesus part, are you still without understanding?

I mean, are you really that slow? Have you been with me that long that you still don't understand these? I'm teaching some pretty basic things, guys. Why are you still not able to understand? It's almost a little bit of shaming for them there. Are you still without understanding? Now, think back with me, 3.

Remember what Jesus said to His disciples. To you has been given what? To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God. To those on the outside, I speak in parables, but to you on the inside, to you has been given the mystery. To know the things of God and to understand the things

of God. And do you remember back when we were studying through that passage, we said, You know, the disciples, it's not like Jesus is saying from this point on, you've got it.

And all I got to do is just say it one time and you've got it because you understand what I'm saying. But remember that we were careful to see that what Jesus was meaning here was not that the disciples have become expert parable interpreters on their own. What he means is. And you're coming to me and asking me, Jesus, can you explain this to it to me?

And then Jesus gives the explanation. That's what he means. And your connection to me has now been given the understanding of the things of the kingdom of God. So here, once again, there's there once again, not understanding. So clearly they have not been endowed with this independent. Spiritual ability to understand Jesus teachings apart from His explanations.

They still have to come to Him. They still have to be grafted to the true vine. And their abiding in the true vine is still the only way that they comprehend the things of the Kingdom of God. So, are you still without understanding? Yes, you are. which is why they're here. So he rebukes them in this sort of a harsh, little bit of a harsh, little bit of a sharp sort of way.

But I think that the reason that this is here, perhaps, is just to help us, just to help us maybe to embrace what Jesus says to the disciples. Are you still so dull? Because, brothers and sisters, this is, we are just as dull. We are absolutely just as dull as these disciples, spiritually speaking. Apart. From abiding in the vine, and apart from Jesus explanation to us, we too are just as dull.

The disciples would spend the rest of their life relying on Jesus explanations to them. For the rest of Jesus time on earth, He would have to explain His teachings to them, and then after He ascends to heaven, He will continue to explain His teachings to them by way of the Spirit that was sent to them.

We too are just as dull, so perhaps this is an invitation for us to just embrace your dullness. Just embrace the fact that apart from Him, you cannot understand any of this. And just be prepared in your heart if Jesus were before you saying the words that he said to these disciples Are you still so dull just be prepared in your heart to say yes, Lord.

I Am dull. I am so dull. Can you use small words and speak slowly because I have a hard time And I need you to help me to understand this. Are you still also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from the outside cannot defile him since it enters not his heart but his stomach and is expelled?

So here it is that Jesus sort of puts aside the parable language and he reverts to If, if we can say this without being disrespectful to locker room language, he just sort of brings it out frank and straight forward. Do you not see what goes in one end comes out the other? And almost like in this, not a course kind of a way, but, but just in a way that's setting aside niceties and politeness, Jesus just says, do you not get it?

What goes in one end comes out the other and it never enters the heart. So, in his frankness, in his forwardness, I, in my mind, I think I can, I can picture the disciples laughing when Jesus said that. Like, kind of like the ice is broken, Jesus was just harsh with them, but now, you know, what goes in one end comes out the other.

And then this sort of laugh among the disciples, yeah, I think we're starting to see it, Jesus. Do you not see that whatever goes into the one? Um, or whatever goes into a person from the outside cannot defile him since it enters not his heart but his stomach and it is thus expelled. So Jesus probably is speaking to people here who have limited at best understanding of the inner workings of the body of what happens to food when it enters through the mouth and it's chewed and swallowed.

Sometime later, comes out the other side. They probably have a limited understanding of that. So, they're not, Jesus is not saying, look, your food, when you eat your food, it doesn't enter into your heart, meaning the organ right here that beats and pumps blood throughout your body. Because never in Scripture is heart ever referred to the organ that pumps blood.

Never. Every time you see heart in Scripture, it's always a metaphorical reference. to some aspect of our person, some aspect of our character, some aspect of our soul. And so Jesus is not saying, look, your food doesn't go in through your mouth and then through the organ that's pumping blood. It's separated from that.

Instead, what he's saying is your food doesn't enter through your mouth and then go into your soul. That's what he's saying, and thus he declares all foods clean, all foods clean. He declares them clean. Now, right here, just a brief note on this, as he declares all, all foods clean, we recall of course that Mark is writing his gospel in close connection with Peter.

Mark is in Rome with Peter, and he's writing in, in essence, he's writing the accounts of Peter. And so doesn't it sound just like what Peter will say? Because Peter, of course, is the apostle in Acts chapter 10 who was praying on the roof. And then there comes the vision of the sheep that comes down from heaven three times with the unclean animals and the voice from heaven says, Kill and rise, kill and eat.

And three times Peter says, Never, Lord, not me. I've never eaten any of those unclean animals. And then we hear three times what the Lord has declared clean. Let no man declare unclean. And then right at the end of that, there's the knock on the door. That's the messenger from Cornelius. He then goes to Cornelius's house, into the house of the unclean Gentile, and then explains to them of Jesus the Messiah.

Holy Spirit falls upon them, and there's conversion in the house. And then Peter says, Oh, I get it now. I get it. You're talking about people. The vision was about food, but you're talking about people. And you're saying that no people are unclean whom the Holy Spirit comes to. No people are unclean whom the Holy Spirit receives unto Himself.

I get it now. So, can't you just see how Peter, now decades later, years later, now looks back upon this and says, you know, Acts chapter 10 was where he declared all foods clean. But this is really where it started. Can't you see Peter reasoning that out? That's really where this started. When Jesus said that food entering through your mouth can't defile you.

That was the beginning of what I would be shown in the vision in Acts chapter 10. So that's what he's speaking of that he declares all foods clean. And he said, what comes out of the person is what defiles him. What goes into the person doesn't defile him. What comes out of the person defiles him. So Jesus has declared.

As Peter, as Mark just said, all foods clean, but in the same breath, he declares all people dirty. He's declared all foods clean, and he's declared all people unclean. It's not what you put in through your mouth that defiles you. It's what comes out of your heart that defiles you. Verse 21, For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery.

Coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, evil, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. So that's quite a list, quite an unpleasant, unsavory sort of list, and we could take our time and walk through each of those, and there's certainly plenty of things that the scripture has to say about each of those, each of these 13 items in this list, but we won't use our time that way.

Instead, what we want to just notice, just look at how Jesus puts this forth, this list of unpleasant, dark realities of the human heart. First, he thought he starts with evil thoughts because just as we said earlier, just as the process of salvation begins in the mind through the hearing of the word and the comprehension of the word goes from there to the heart and from the heart to the will.

So also it works in reverse. Notice this, that as salvation and sanctification begin in the mind, so also does evil. Evil thoughts. Jesus is speaking this, of course, remember, close at hand, is the memory of these Pharisees, the Pharisees whom He knows their thoughts. The Pharisees whom on the outside are so clean and so whitewashed, but Jesus knows their thoughts are so full of evil.

So He begins here, all evil begins. It begins with the thoughts, evil thoughts, sexual immorality, taking that gift that God has given for the intended purpose of the covenant bond of marriage between man and woman, taking that and perverting it for temporary physical pleasure, sexual immorality, theft, declaring yourself to be the God of your life and saying, even though God has not given this to me, even though He has favored you and given this to you, I'll nevertheless take it from Him.

I'll take it from you by violence if I have to. Theft. I'm the God of my life, I'm the God of my world. If I want something, I'll take it. Murder. The violent taking of another life. The violent taking, the wrong, sinful taking of another life. But murder, of course, not just in the physical life, but murder of one's reputation.

Murder of one's thoughts. The murder of another in your heart, the hatred that Jesus is, is the root of murder, adultery, violating the most sacred covenant between two people, the most sacred of all covenants between two humans, the violation of that sacred covenant, adultery, coveting. The sinful declaring that God didn't know what He was doing when He gave me what He gave me and didn't give me what He didn't give me, and instead I sinfully covet what God didn't give me.

Declaring myself to be wiser than God and saying, well, if I was God, everybody knows I should have had this. Wickedness. That's a pretty generic sort of phrase describing the wickedness of this age. Deceit. The violation of the image of God within us, the God of truth, the God who is truth. Deceit says that truth is worthless to us.

The truth is not valuable to us. We will speak deceit with our mouth. We will think it with our thoughts. We will deceive with our actions. Sensuality, the worshipping of the body, the using of the body for physical pleasure only. Envy. Envy. The sinful looking at what God has given to others and wishing that they didn't have it.

Slander. That word there is 'blasphemia.' When the object of that word is God, it's translated blaspheme. When the object of that word is a, is a human, it's translated slander. So that helps you to understand a little bit about blasphemy, right? It's the same word, when it's committed against God, it's blasphemy.

When it's committed against another person, it's slander. So slander is the murdering of someone with your words. Oftentimes untrue words, but words that are intended to hurt and, and injure. Pride, what's sometimes called the root of all sin, the first sin that seemed to evidence itself in the garden, the sin of pride, and then finishing with foolishness.

Foolishness. Foolishness, because it is indeed the foolishness of man to fall into all these sins. It is the foolishness of man to not desire God, to not be interested in God. It is the foolishness of man to bow down to these things instead of the God who created them. It is the pure foolishness of man.

So he begins with evil thoughts and he ends with foolish hearts. Psalm 14, verse one, the fool says in his heart, there is no God. Now the psalmist there is not talking about the one who denies that God exists. The fool who says in his heart, there is no God, he's speaking of the one who knows that God exists, yet lives his life as though God doesn't exist.

Lives his life as though God is not really God. So the foolishness of knowing that God exists, yet living as though He doesn't exist. Quite a, quite a list of things, is it not? Evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.

A list of sinful traits, sinful realities that, quite frankly, our world around us would hesitate to even call sin. The culture around us would, would want to defer to the autonomy of the individual, and perhaps many of these things are undesirable, many of these things... This could be hurtful to other people, but we'll stop far short of calling them sin.

Instead, these sins that he declares from out of the heart of the man come these evil thoughts. All these evil thoughts come from within and they defile the person. They defile. So Jesus sources all these things into the evil things of the heart. That's the source, the source from within. We live in a world today that would explain all these things differently, don't we?

We live in a world today that would stop far short of declaring that all these undesirable actions and behaviors and attitudes, well, they have a source, but the source is not the person itself. The source is not some sort of evil inside the person. Instead, we're well accustomed to being told that the root of all these things, these undesirable traits of society and people around us, these, the roots of these things would fall into three categories.

Three categories, you've heard these, they all begin with E; education, example, and environment. And that's what our world will tell us, education, example, and environment. That's where all these things come from. And so all of these undesirable realities of society and the undesirable realities of the broken relationships between husband and wife, between parents and children, between friends and coworkers, family members, all these undesirable things really can be traced to one or more of these three things, education, environment, or example.

Well, that person has just, they've just had bad examples in their life. It's not that they're evil. They just had bad examples. They've, they've had bad mentors, they've had bad people to look up to,

and they grew up looking up to bad examples, and so therefore, they are such bad people, or they do such bad things.

They wouldn't call them bad people. They say they, this is why they do these things. They've had these, these examples or perhaps it's just their education. Education could fix this. If we could just get rid of all the illiteracy, if we could just educate everyone, then we can certainly alleviate all these problems of society.

Or, of course, environment. You know, this person just grew up in a bad environment. It was just a bad, just a bad environment to grow up in. That's, that's to be blamed for the bad behavior today. And so we would stop far short of declaring that the heart is the source for any of these things. But the problem is, if you believe that at all, the problem is that all three of those explanations completely fall apart under their own weight.

Anyone who is willing to believe that the source of all the wrong in society around you can be traced to these things, it literally falls apart under its own weight. Because you... Beyond the fact that it's really difficult, if not impossible, to honestly look around at the world in which you live, and with an honest, straight face, say that the problems of this world are not the problems of people's hearts, but they're the problems of poor environments, or lack of education, or bad examples.

Not only is that unbelievably naive, but it just simply doesn't work. Because each one of these supposed sources of the problems of society today, each one of them worked the same way in reverse, thereby completely nullifying themselves. So such and such a person, well, they do such bad things because they just had bad examples.

They grew up seeing bad examples all the time. And that's why they do such bad things. That works a little bit until you come across the person who does just as bad things, but they grew up with good examples. They've had good examples their whole life. Well, what their problem is that they just can't live up to the good examples around them.

They feel inferior. They, they feel somehow just inferior to all the good examples around them, or, or maybe they've had good examples, but they've seen their good examples fall short. So that's, that explains it. So you see. Bad examples? Oh, well, no, not, they've got good examples, well, here's why good examples also produce the same bad, bad behavior.

Doesn't work. Environment. Well, this person does such evil things, such bad things, because they grew up in such a poor environment. They grew up in an environment of abuse and neglect and, well, the problem is, all that works until you come across the one who does just as bad things and grew up in the best of environments.

Well, for that person, their environment was too good. They got everything they wanted. They were never told no. They had all the resources available to them they ever wanted, and so that's why that person does such evil things. You see, it works both ways. Or what about education? Well, there's so much evil in the world because there's so much lack of education.

If we could just advance education, then we could fix the problems of people and the problems of society. Well, once again, the problem is... That works as long as you don't come across those

who've had the advantage of all the education in the world and still do just such evil things. Well, this person's problem was that they lacked good education.

They didn't have the opportunity for education. Well, this person over here, well, they were sent to the best Ivy League school. And, well, I guess it turns out that at that Ivy League school, that's where they learned all the bad things that they know. You see? It works the same way. For whatever you want to fill in that blank with because none of those things can come close to describing the world in which we live.

All of those things play a role and as Christians would be foolish to deny that all of those things play an important role. None of those things are the source for any evil behavior. Any evil thoughts, any wickedness in society, none of it. Because Jesus says quite plainly, the source is the heart. The source is the heart.

And as Jesus is describing this, He's not just describing the heart of some people. This is the really important part of the passage, I think, to get. When Jesus lists these sinful behaviors, Jesus isn't saying, Oh, these are the sins of some wicked people. Let's look again at the passage. He says back to verse 18, are you also without understanding?

Do not see that whatever goes into a person. So four times in the passage, once in verse 18, once again, in verse 20, once again, in verse 21, and again, in verse 23. We see a person or a man. In Mark's original Greek, he uses the definite article. That doesn't show up in the English except in the King James.

One of the times, I think in verse 23, the King James will use the definite article. In the NASB, we use the definite article. We don't use the definite article because it's hard to work. It just doesn't make good English. But Mark uses the definite article each time. The man, the man, the man, the man. What Jesus is saying is I'm not describing some particular group of people.

I'm describing humanity. I'm describing all of fallen humanity. All of these sinful practices are found in every human heart. All of them. That's what Jesus is saying. If you find that hard to accept, then let's just think about this for a minute. Most of us would come to this list and we perhaps would choose some of the more polite sins and, and we would give a nod to this one.

Oh yes, of course, I've had evil thoughts and I believe, yeah, I probably have stolen something. Um, and I probably have, have lied before, before. And of course, I've got pride in my heart, but I've never murdered anybody. I've never committed adultery. We would perhaps pick some of the nicer, more accepted, more polite sins, but few of us would look at this list and honestly, with eyes wide open, say that every single one of those describes me.

And that's what Jesus is saying. Every one of those sins is found in every human heart. You say, I've never murdered anybody. Aside from the fact that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, of course, equates hatred in your heart to murder, I would still push back upon that and say, the great majority of humans have never physically murdered another person for reasons other than the sin wasn't found in your heart.

What I mean is this. In His grace and in His mercy, God has provided an enormous number of barriers That prevent us from sinning as much as we could. Even fallen human beings, fallen men

and women, men and women who are not found in Christ, even they enjoy an enormous amount of grace from God in the sense that He withholds so many sins from them.

How does He do this? Well, through the pressure of others, public, public perception, or the fear of consequence. The dread of being discovered. If you search your heart close enough with honest enough eyes You must say to yourself that there have been times in my life in which if I knew I would never be discovered If I knew there were no consequences if I knew no one would ever find out I would have done harm to that person All of us have that sin in our heart.

It's the grace of God that so often restrains those sins by means of the fear of discovery or the fear of consequences or the fear of losing reputation. But all of us, should the earthly consequences be removed, should we know without doubt we would never be discovered, never suffer any earthly consequences, we would all surprise ourself.

Sadly, so. At displaying the capacity to commit every one of these sins. Remember the story of Abimelech? Abimelech was the pagan king in Egypt, and Abram and Sarai go down there, and Abimelech thinks that Sarai is so pretty, he makes her one of his harem. But God prevents him from taking her unto himself because she was the wife of promise to Abraham And then later we're told that a Abimelech says praise to God He kept me from sinning and he was no child of God That's an example of the grace of God extended to all of humanity because all of humanity would be far more sinful than it really is.

Should God remove the grace of cultural consequences, of civil consequences, of reputation consequences, of just the, sometimes the, the logistical difficulty of committing some of these sins? All of us, without the grace of God, would have committed all of these sins. But then of course, it is the ultimate grace of God in the heart of the converted man and woman.

And it is only that that truly begins to chip away at the heart that can sin in thought and attitude without ever being discovered, with no external consequences. Because that's really where the rubber meets the road when it comes to your thought life, when it comes to your inner attitudes, your inner emotions.

They come without consequences by and large. And so it is in the realm of the inner sin that the Christian finds themself largely without earthly barriers. And it's that inner realm of holiness that the Christian finds so difficult. All these evil things come from within, and they defile the person.

They defile humanity. They defile all. They are the true defilers. Now,

I want to finish in verse 23, just by recognizing, of course, as he speaks of the heart here, the evil things come from within, they come from the heart. And that is where the defilement comes. Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 23 says to keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life.

This is truly the work. Of the believer, the work, the lifelong work of the Christian. Keep your heart or guard your heart with all vigilance for flume it from it flow the springs of life in the grace of God. I've been blessed over the last week or so to have been reading a wonderful, a wonderful book by a Puritan by the name of John Flavel, who wrote in the 17th century.

And in the Puritan way of writing, as we talked about this before, the, the wonderful Puritan way of writing was to take one verse of scripture and turn it into a whole book by just taking that verse of scripture and squeezing it, and turning it and wrenching it every sort of way to squeeze from it every ounce of spiritual benefit possible.

So in this book I'm reading in the book is called Keeping the Heart, and he takes as that verse, Proverbs chapter four and verse 23, keep with all diligence.

I wish I could stand up here and read to you half the book because you really just need to experience it on your own, but there's one selection. Let me just read this selection and just hear the importance. Just hear the intensity for the for the believer to keep their heart. He begins by saying that keeping of the heart must begin with the conversion of the heart.

No one can keep their heart before it's converted. You can't keep an unconverted heart. So you must be the recipient of the, of an act of the Holy Spirit of the work of God upon your heart before you even have a heart to keep. But after that, he says, this being presupposed, it is not difficult to understand what it is to keep the heart.

It is nothing less than the constant care and diligence of this type of renewed man to preserve and maintain daily his soul in that holy frame that grace has placed him in. For although grace has in great measure rectified the soul and given it a habitual and heavenly temperament, yet in practice, sin often decomposes it again.

In this way, even a gracious heart is like a musical instrument. No matter how perfectly it is tuned, a small matter brings it out of tune again before you can play another lesson on it. This is the case with the gracious hearts. By that he means the heart that has received grace. This is the case with gracious hearts.

If they are engaged in one duty, Yet, how dull, dead, and disordered they are when they come to another. As a result, every duty needs a unique preparation of the heart. If you prepare your heart, you will stretch out your hands toward Him, Job 11 verse 13. Therefore, to keep the heart is to carefully preserve it from sin.

Which disorders it, and to maintain that spiritual and gracious, dis, dis disposition that fits it for a life of communion with God. Isn't that beautiful? That fits your heart for a life of communion with God. Keep your heart with all diligence. This is what the psalmist says in Psalm 51 that we mentioned earlier.

Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence. And take not your Holy Spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit.