

Clean

Mark 7

January 28, 2018

We exist to enjoy and share the love and message of God with everyone.

DAY 1: Clean and Unclean

Mark 7:1 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and ² saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed.

Mark 7:3-4 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

Mark 7:5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

1. One of the things that is so puzzling about the Jewish religious leaders is their hyper-attention to things they considered of a life and death nature that we consider so trivial. These leaders often confront Jesus with His apparent disregard for the ceremonial law, dietary laws, and laws regarding to purity.
2. What was the point of the cleanliness laws? It's was as if God was saying to them, "My people have no idea how sinful they are. They don't see their rebellion and self-centeredness, their coveting and adultery. They justify any and everything. Therefore, I'm going to surround them with such small, minute reminders of 'uncleanness,' that it may awaken them to their need of a spiritual bath."
3. If you have ever plodded through the book of Leviticus, you have an appreciation for just how thorough God can be to put reminders around His people in virtually every aspect of their daily lives!
4. Before the people enter the temple or tabernacle, they had to be made clean first. The whole enterprise can be summed up like this:
 - God is holy.
 - I am not. I am morally "unclean."
 - I need to be made holy, washed and cleansed.
5. The Jewish leaders believed that if they followed all the "cleanliness" laws (dietary, illness, etc.) that they were worthy of being in God's presence.
6. What strikes you about this approach to living in order to be in God's presence?

Day 2: Where does the problem of man lie?

Mark 7:14 (NIV) Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"

1. One of the great debates down the centuries is this: "What is wrong with man?"

2. Jesus is saying that what makes a man morally unclean has nothing to do with what's outside of him. (1) There is something terribly wrong with man, and (2) The problem lies **in** the human heart.

3. Of course, when you bring this up to the average person on the university campus, you can expect all hell to break loose. Their talking points will be these:
 - a. "You bible-thumping Christians are too negative."
 - b. "Don't you see the guilt and shame you promulgate on everyone?"
 - c. "Now that we're educated, can't you see how education and science has solved the problem of man?"
 - d. "What we need is to rid ourselves of these arcane and uneducated beliefs, throw off any standards except the ones we each believe, and talk about the dignity and goodness in the heart of man."

4. Now that may sound quite intellectual, impressive, and uplifting on the university campus, but in real life, just because you espouse those talking points doesn't mean that suddenly your latent sense of guilt, and feelings of shame magically go away. This begs several questions:
 - a. Why exactly do we deal with guilt?

 - b. Why exactly do we deal with shame?

5. According to Jesus, where does the origin of what's wrong with man lie?

6. If the problem with man is really inside man, can human solutions given above have much effect on solving man's moral dilemma? (Look back at the talking points in question 3).

7. If the problem lies **INSIDE** man, can an **OUTSIDE** solution essentially deal with the problem?

DAY 3: An inside look into inside uncleanness

Mark 7:20 He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'

²¹ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

²³ All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

1. If you talk to someone about the bible, and the word “sin” comes up, it’s not unusual to see an eye roll next.

2. I don’t know how many people I’ve talked to that equate “sin” with being an ax-murderer, a rapist, or someone like Adolph Hitler.

3. They equate “big sins” with sin itself.

4. In Mark 7:21-22 how would you characterize the list of sins Jesus mentioned?

5. How many sins from this list would make the average person’s “sin” list, the “big ones”?

6. Does Jesus hint or suggest that some or all of these things are due to the any of the following:

a. My parents were dysfunctional,

b. I had an alcoholic father,

c. We were in the military and I went to eight different schools,

d. My parents were too involved in advancing their careers and being successful to spend much time with us.

e. My parents split up when I was kid. I saw my dad every other Wednesday and every other weekend?

7. Jesus uses the analogy of what makes a man “unclean.” What are some of the points of using this analogy with regard to sin? Does the problem of shame come from being unclean? Are the two related? What about guilt?

DAY 4: The outside to inside fix?

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Mark 7:5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

1. The assumption of the Pharisees and modern day “intellectuals” is that doing something good should be enough to make us “good enough.” Of course, some go farther, proclaiming that man is “basically good” in his core.

2. “Modern” thinking assumes that if you’re “good” outweighs your “bad,” than you’re good enough. Of course, the second assumption is that you are your own judge. And no so shockingly, virtually everyone passes their own test.

3. What “good” do people try. Let’s look at a few:

a. “Religion” – “If I _____ (pick your brand of religious practices), then that’s all I need.”

Or, for some, “If we could do away with religion altogether, then we’d be better off.”

b. Education/science: “If we were just more educated, we could solve the ills of humanity.”

c. Politics: “If we could just change the ‘social structures’ and ‘institutions’ then we could solve the problem of man.

4. Notice that all of these things have been tried for centuries. They are being tried today. Are any of them effective at dealing with what’s wrong with human nature? Are ALL of them, COMBINED effective at dealing with what’s wrong with human nature?

5. The problem with an “outside” fix is that it cannot change human nature. Look at how God described the rebellion and stubbornness of the human heart to chase almost anything instead of God.

Jeremiah 2:20 "Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, 'I will not serve you!' Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a prostitute. ²¹I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine? ²²Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me," declares the Sovereign LORD.

6. No outside-in fix will do! No outside-in fix can clean the human heart.

DAY 5: The divine solution to guilt and shame: God cleanses us,

1. How many times have you heard someone say, “I know God forgives me but I just can’t forgive myself?”
2. Why do you think this is true? What drives this?
 - a. We are more bummed by our failure than by our sin.
 - b. Our pride is exposed—we believe “we should be better than that,” or that “we should be past that (sin) now.”
 - c. Our “real” belief is that we should be able to change, and we should be able to pull it off.
3. All of these are not that different from the Pharisees’ approach of religious deeds. It is the false belief some outside effort should be able to change the heart. It won’t, and to top it off, the greater our arrogance that we “should” be able to change, the deeper will be the discouragement when we fail.
4. The solution for heart change is not a human solution. It is a divine solution.

Jeremiah 33:8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.

⁹ And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them; they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

5. Not only can God cleanse us, but He can give us a new heart and a new spirit. (The new heart and new spirit is not a one-time “fix.” Both of these just make it possible to live differently. We will still have to deal with our old nature).

Ezekiel 36:24 (RSV) For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land.

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

²⁶ A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

²⁸ You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses; and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.

Isaiah 1:18 “Come, now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson they shall be as lamb’s wool.”

6. Humbling ourselves, and simply receiving His forgiveness IS the solution to guilt and shame—if you’ll let it!