

# Don't Forget to Wash

6/3/18

Message 29

Mark 7:1–23 (NIV)

## That Which Defiles

7:1–23pp—Mt 15:1–20

**7** The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus <sup>2</sup> and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup> 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.)

<sup>5</sup> 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 defiled hands?”

<sup>6</sup> He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“ ‘These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

<sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.’

<sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

<sup>9</sup> And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ <sup>11</sup> But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—<sup>12</sup> then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.

<sup>13</sup> Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

<sup>14</sup> Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. <sup>15</sup> Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” <sup>[16]</sup>

<sup>17</sup> After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. <sup>18</sup> “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

<sup>20</sup> He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

## 1. Many of us struggle to not only do what is right but to think what is right.

### A. For example:

1. How many of you have had thoughts about another person and make the comment, “I’m a terrible person”?
2. Maybe you wanted to slap someone or give them a piece of your mind, but you didn’t.
  - a. Part of you is celebrating.
  - b. The old you would have slapped her or wrote that Facebook post, but you didn’t.
3. Yet, just the thought of doing those things led you to say, “I’m a terrible person”.
4. Or you might say, “Does it make me a terrible person if I want to...”
5. The answer is, yes it probably does make you a terrible person.

6. If not terrible, then it does show you that you are indeed human in need of forgiveness and grace.

7. Sin is a constant problem in our world.

**B.** The definition of sin seems to be always changing.

1. This change started in the Garden of Eden when the Serpent declared that what God said was wrong or at least incomplete.

2. In our day what was sinful and shameful 30 years ago is paraded as normal now.

3. The goal of evil is to eventually reach a place where what God said is good becomes bad and what is bad becomes good.

4. The Prophet Isaiah wrote about this:

**Isaiah 5:20** Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

**C.** By Jesus' day, the religious elite had taken the concept of sin to a whole new level.

1. They started with the Law of Moses (God's Word to them).

2. Then they added all of these traditions, rituals, and rules on top so as to make sure that the Law was never broken.

3. By the time the religious experts were done, the true meaning of God's Word was twisted and hidden.

4. It became possible to be completely obedient to the religious teachings and yet completely miss the intention God had to begin with.

**D. This morning we are confronted with the danger of redefining sin in such a way that we miss what God says about sin.**

2. The narrative begins with the Pharisees questioning Jesus.

A. The question was, "Why don't your disciples follow our traditions?"

1. The super religious Pharisees had hundreds of traditions.
2. These traditions had the same status as God's Word.
  - a. To break a tradition of the Elders was to sin.
  - b. Regardless of what God actually said about it.
2. One of the most common was for Jews to wash hands and bathe before they ate and after they went to the market.

B. The ceremonial washing was not to kill germs, it was to "wipe away" sin.

1. Sin or uncleanness could be transmitted from touch.
  - a. This explains why the woman with the issue of blood was so scandalous.
  - b. Because she was unclean, it was believed she could transmit her impurity to anyone she touches.
2. For the Pharisees it wasn't a fear of germs that led them to wash their hands and bathe.
  - a. It was a fear of ingesting something impure or sinful, causing them to be separated from God.
  - b. Perhaps they had touched someone who was a sinner, an outcast, or belonged to the wrong political party and that made them "unclean".
  - c. They didn't want that to get inside of them when they ate, so they washed after they went to the market.

C. The disciples were not following this tradition and neither was Jesus.

1. And the Pharisees wanted to know why not?
2. The reason was that Jesus had told them they didn't need to.
  - a. The disciples had probably been taught to follow this tradition when they were younger.

b. It was Jesus' responsibility as their Rabbi (Teacher) to make sure the disciples followed the traditions.

c. But Jesus didn't make them do this.

3. The Pharisees questioned Jesus, "Why do you allow this?"

a. "Don't you care about our traditions?"

b. Jesus' response was, "No I don't care about your traditions because your traditions are wrong."

c. The Pharisees did not understand sin and cleanness.

d. To a religious person, sin is something somebody else does.

e. To Jesus, sin is something inside of every one of us that is far more terrible and persistent than we realize.

### 3. Jesus took this opportunity to clarify what sin is and where it comes from.

A. The root of sin is the attitude and motive behind the action.

1. There is an old saying that says, "So a man thinks, so he does."

2. The Pharisees were trying to keep from touching "sin" while harboring thoughts and ideas of hate, jealousy, lust, and greed.

3. For them, sin was something external.

a. Just as many men are told when they get married that they can "Look at, but not touch another woman",

b. The Pharisees believed that as long as they didn't touch sin they were safe from sin.

4. The Pharisees thought they had codified sin to the place where they could live a sinless life.

5. Jesus destroyed this idea by saying that sin lived in them.

B. All throughout Jesus' ministry, He was accused of eating and being with sinners.

1. The religious people thought that because of the company Jesus was keeping that the sin of the people was rubbing off on him.
2. The Pharisees didn't like it that Jesus went to the house of sinners and got close to them.
3. But Jesus demonstrated that they, themselves, were temples of sin.

C. Religion blames sin on outside forces, Jesus blames sin on inside forces.

1. Religion looks for an external fix to an internal problem.
2. The problem with sin isn't what we do, it is what we think and believe.
3. Our actions follow our heart.

#### 4. Sin is a heart issue.

A. Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13:

1. Mark 7:6-7 (NIV) <sup>6</sup> He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: " 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. <sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.'
2. The ancients didn't understand that the brain is the source of human thought and reasoning.
  - a. The Hebrew terms we use for "heart" actually refer to the bowels and intestines.
  - b. We often say that we have a "gut feeling".
  - c. Our ancestors actually believed that our internals/heart was the seat of human thought, emotion, and decision making.

3. Jesus and Isaiah were saying that though they honored God with their words, their thoughts and emotions were far from God.

a. Outwardly they looked right with God.

b. But God, who knows us inside and out, knew they were full of hate, jealousy, murder, and arrogance.

c. I remember times cleaning a fish or an animal and exposing its insides to see what it has eaten.

d. In this instance, Jesus was exposing what was inside the Pharisees and no amount of bathing or washing hands was not enough to fix them.

## 5. Jesus' words are a challenge for people who are prone to religion.

A. I'm one of those guys that thrive on rules, regulations, and outward protocols.

1. If I can avoid a certain list of things, then I am good.

2. If I don't avoid those things on my list, I am bad.

3. If I am bad, I have to find a way to counteract it.

4. In many ways, I am just like a Pharisee: I have created my own set of rules that, if obeyed, I can save myself from sin.

B. Jesus declared this to be pointless.

Mark 7:14–23 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. <sup>15</sup> Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them." <sup>[16]</sup>

<sup>17</sup> After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. <sup>18</sup> "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

<sup>20</sup> He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual

immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

1. Jesus was talking to a group of people who had been taught to don't eat, don't touch, and don't associate with specific things.
2. If they followed this list, then they were good.
3. If they broke this list, they were bad.
4. Jesus' response: YOU ARE ALL BAD!

C. You can't avoid sin because sin lives in you.

1. Life would be much simpler if we could create a concrete list of do's and don'ts.
2. Many of us would be happier if we could be our own saviors because that would put us in the drivers seat.
  - a. The problem is that when we are in the driver's seat we are no better than a hormone-crazed teenager with a date and a car.
  - b. We can't be trusted to ourselves, for out of us comes all this sin and nastiness.

3. All of the lists and rituals in the world is not enough to make us clean from sin.

4. The only hope we have is the redeeming and cleansing blood of Jesus.

**5. Jesus didn't make his disciples bathe and wash like the Pharisees because He knew that someday He would permanently wash them clean by His blood.**

6. Many of us here today know the struggle.

A. Perhaps you have thoughts, emotions, or behaviors that you know are not good.

1. You look clean on the outside but you are dying on the inside.



2. You may look like you have it all together but secretly feel like everything you touch falls apart.

3. You think to yourself, "If people only knew what was going on inside me, then they would never talk to me again."

B. If that is you today, then allow me to point you to Jesus.

1. Only He can deal with the desperation you feel.

2. Maybe you feel like a hypocrite:

a. Good on the outside and nasty on the inside.

b. This is exactly what Jesus was dealing with here in Mark 7.

3. Only Jesus can reconcile the two.

4. Jesus can cleanse you from your:

a. sexual immorality,

b. your theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice.

c. Deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly.

d. Jesus, through the power and work of the Holy Spirit, has the power to change you from the inside out.

C. For some, your deliverance will be immediate and miraculous.

1. Others of you your deliverance will be a deliberate process.

2. As your sin is exposed, and you realize what you are doing is sinful and wrong, in those moments the Holy Spirit will show you and give you the choice.

a. In those moments, you will have the choice and the chance to repent and ask the Holy Spirit to change you.

b. But you also have the choice of letting that sin take root in your life and further establish itself.

c. You must choose to deal with the source of your sin or to let your life be a temple for that sin.

D. Every day you can see people who have made their lives temples for sin.

1. **Without Jesus, we become identified with our sin.**
2. The Pharisees had become identified by their traditions and, therefore, their sin.
  - a. In eternity you will be identified either through the lens of Jesus' grace and mercy or through the lens of your sin.
  - b. For those who choose Jesus, they are called children of God.
  - c. Let us read what awaits them:

Revelation 21:1–8 (NIV)

*Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

*<sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

*<sup>6</sup> He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> **Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.***

3. But for those who do not allow God to forgive and change them, they become identified by their sin.

*<sup>8</sup> But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

Today, will you come to Jesus with your hate, your jealousy, or maybe your lust and allow Him to change you and forgive you today?