

Really Clean

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 7. If you study through the Gospel of Mark as we have been doing, whether you noticed it or not, there is a building up that happens.

Mark chapter 7. And the ministry of Jesus is bumping. It's working. We have went from the question of who is he? The people are now asking where is he?

The passage that we look at today, some are asking, what are we going to do about it? Crowds are everywhere. Miracles are happening. Teaching is effective. Lives are being changed. People are noticing. The religious establishment is noticing. And now they're asking, what are we going to do about it?

They are, in our passage today, they've already approached it before, but it's about to intensify. And they're kind of setting their feet for the proper attack on this Messiah-type figure in their eyes that people are trying to force to become king.

Now, I want you to notice how they build up their attack. It's found in Mark chapter 7, beginning in verse 1. It says this, Now, when the Pharisees gathered to him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.

[1 : 51] For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.

There are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches. And the Pharisees and scribes asked him, why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with undefiled hands?

And he said to them, well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites as it is written? These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. And he said to them, you have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition.

For Moses said, honor your father and mother, and whoever reviles father and mother must surely die. But you say, if a man tells his father or his mother, whatever you would have gained from me is corvid, that is, given to God, then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you've handed down, and many such things you do.

[3 : 19] And he called the people to him again, and he said, hear me, all of you, and understand, there is nothing outside a person by going into them can defile them, but the things that come out of the person are what defile them.

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? And then Mark adds this parenthetical statement when he says, 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 of these things come from within, and they defile a person. Well, they were on it. Jesus was getting too much attention.

[4 : 37] People were taking him seriously. And the religious establishment didn't like it. They didn't like what they heard. They didn't like the attention not coming to them. And so now they're starting to watch, and they're starting to listen, and they're looking for something to pin him on.

It was time for them to confront him. And they didn't confront him over morality. They couldn't. They didn't this time confront him over blasphemy, although they had accused him of that before.

This is their key move this time. Hand washing. That's where we'll get him. Hand washing. But they're not the only ones that do such.

Many focus on becoming clean on the outside. Now, they were serious about this. They were zealous upholders of the written law.

And their written law is the first five books of our Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And particularly Exodus and Leviticus, those rules, they were big on it, zealous about it.

[5 : 46] But in addition to that, they were also zealous about their oral law. And the oral law was those laws that the rabbis came up with to better define how to interpret what was in the first five books of the Old Testament.

They came up with how to define that. They didn't think the word went far enough with a great enough explanation, so they went further than that.

A lot further than that. And in the beginning, those rabbinical laws were only spoken. And then over time, after the life of Christ, in the second and third century, they were recorded into about a 200-page book called the Mishnah.

And the Mishnah were the rabbinical laws written down to interpret the law. They weren't satisfied with that.

So over the next 400 years, they began to elaborate on that. And they came up with about 6,000 pages. All of it commentary, debates, and traditions stemming out of their interpretation of the laws.

[7 : 03] And they called that the Talmud. Let me just give you an example of some of these rabbinical rules. One is you could not look in the mirror on the Sabbath.

Now, some of these men in here, I can tell you, you still follow that. And the reason why you couldn't do that is because you might be tempted to work on your face or your hair, and that was labor on the Sabbath.

And that was unlawful. We don't consider that unlawful, by the way. You could not wear false teeth on the Sabbath. Surprisingly, they had them.

They weren't very good ones, and they fell out. And when they fell out, you had to bend over and pick them up, and that's work. So just don't wear them at all.

We don't follow that policy either, by the way. You could not carry burdens on the Sabbath. And so if you were, if you needed a handkerchief, and you were downstairs and your handkerchief was upstairs, they literally wrote this down.

[8 : 10] You could go upstairs and tie the handkerchief around your neck so that you're not carried. Untie it and blow your nose.

That's allowed. If you spit on the ground, if you scuff it with your foot, you're not going to be. Therefore, that's work.

So therefore, you could not do that. And there are huge books full of this stuff. And they were serious about it. And now they hear of one that claimed to forgive sins.

One that is associated with tax collectors. One that has disregarded some Sabbath rules. And they had to stop him. And so they saw him eating with his disciples. And they went after ceremonial hand washing.

Now listen, they're not going after poor hygiene. I want to be clear. You ought to wash your hands. Okay? And you ought to do it thoroughly. Okay? Wash your hands. What they were going after was not poor hygiene.

[9 : 14] It was about pure religion. And in some ways, there was nothing wrong with where they started. They started in the right place. It goes back to the priest washing before he went into the tabernacle.

Which is good. Exodus and Leviticus spent a lot of time dealing with the need to be clean. But they took it further. In a modern day demonstration, I was able to see when I went to the western wall in Jerusalem.

When I went to the western wall in Jerusalem, when you're standing where the men can stand at the western wall, and you look to the left, there's an arch called Wilson's Arch. And it leads to a lot of tunnels that go throughout the Temple Mount.

But in the very beginning stage where I could enter, there's the rabbinical library. You look to the left there where the wood is.

You go inside under that. There is a long library there. It's the top. It's all these rules and regulations that they have. And it's in that area. And they would come over and grab one of those scrolls and would pray there along that wall.

[10:20] And that's what they're doing in that picture. But as you enter into that area, there was a faucet there for them to clean before they went in to pray. And there was a cup chained to the faucet.

Now, I went to the restroom right next to this. And when I went to wash my hands, which I encourage you to do, and when I went to wash my hands, there was a cup that was chained to the faucet.

It wasn't exactly this faucet. This is outside. It was primarily for going into Wilson's Arch to pray. But there was a faucet there, and a rabbi was standing next to me.

And I watched the process. Now, he didn't notice that the cup has two hands. He grabs it with the right hand and fills it up and then moves it to the left hand when it's full.

And then pour it over his right hand at least two times past the wrist. Most of them would do it three times just to make sure.

[11:29] But then either taking a towel or getting the other hand. Depending on the circumstances. And get that, and then they do the same on the left.

Making sure not to touch the cup that would be dirty. Then they dried it with a towel. And they did that before they ate, when they woke up in the morning, and before some of the prayers were in the morning.

That's what they were going to say. They didn't see that happening with the apostles. And Jesus found out ironic. And he told them. To put it simply, he used the words of Isaiah to call them hypocrites.

And the examples that he gave is about their neglect to their parents in the name of God. He mentions in verse 11, Corban.

Corban is money that has been pledged to the Lord. It is when you take some of your assets and you pledge them to the Lord, if you don't need them before you give them or before your death when they're giving.

[12:43] So you had access to them. But they're pledged to God unless you need them. However, when other people needed them, they were pledged to God.

You couldn't have them. Including their own parents. When the parents were in need, instead of honoring their parents and taking care of them in their old age, as you should and as tradition very much called for it, that happens.

They would say, I'd be happy to help, but this is corporate, this is a gift. I can't help. Understanding. They can utilize it themselves.

They can do it. Jesus calls it. He speaks to that. He talks about the hypocrisy of that. In Matthew 23, he speaks even more about this kind of attitude.

The seven woes are rough. I'm just telling you, you're rough on them. I just want to read a few of them. It says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they're full of greed and self-indulgence.

[13:58] And that was actually a practice where there was a greater emphasis on cleaning the outside of the cup than the inside. Let me look at that. Woe to you! He said, Excuse me, you blind Pharisees.

First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, then the outside also may be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you're like whitewashed tombs which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all that kind of thing.

So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and flawlessness. And let me be clear, they're not the only ones that focus on looking clean on the outside.

Any of us, maybe all of us, can be prone to look right on the outside and neglect the matters on the inside. I mean, we look good, dress right, leaving the house on Sunday morning, you know. And if there's some neighbor that's not going to church that don't look right, then we let them know we're going to the house of the Lord. And that's why we look so good.

[15:09] We come in here smiling. We may have beat our children with a hairbrush all the way here. But we come in smiling, singing, praising, maybe even amening.

But what about the real house? Many focus on being clean on the outside. Jesus focuses on being dirty on the outside.

He says in verse 15, there's nothing outside a person that by going into him can devile him. But the things that come out of a person are what deviles. Now notice what happens when he says that.

Mark says in verse 19, then he declares all foods clean. You see, it's not about food. It's not about clean hands. At least not for spiritual purity, which is what he's speaking of.

It's about having a pure heart and a pure mind. It's about your thought life. And then he gets into that. It's about combating the impure thoughts in your life.

[16:19] It's about going to war over the hateful thoughts in your life. It's about doing away with the coveting thoughts in your life. It's about not tolerating the deceitful thoughts of your life.

It's about having nothing to do with the envious thoughts of your life. Not entertaining the slanderous thoughts of your life. Ignoring the prideful thoughts of your life.

Having nothing to do with the foolish thoughts of your life. It's about the dirt on the inside. And you may say, well, I'm not doing it. I mean, I'm just thinking about sexual sin.

Or I'm just thinking about revengeful sin. Or I'm just thinking envious thoughts or desires sins. I just think those things. I'm just thinking hateful things.

I'm just pondering on prideful things. But I want to be clear about something. Every action starts with a thought. It always does. And thinking about it, especially entertaining the thought, is a sin against God.

[17:20] It is unclean as filthy hands at the table. It is as nasty in the eyes of God as what is expelled out of the body after we digest food.

And that's graphic, but that's the graphic that Jesus uses. We can look the part. We can make others think what we want and pretend everything is okay.

We can even look down on others who do not have their acts together like we pretend to have it. But I want to be clear this morning.

God knows the difference. He knows that we don't have our act together. He knows that when we put others down, sometimes just in our minds, that's sin too, by the way, when we put others down, that it's our effort to make ourselves feel better.

Because maybe we don't live to the standard that we need to live to, but at least I'm better off than they are. And He knows those things. He's well aware of those things.

[18:26] Many focus on being clean on the outside. Jesus focuses on being dirty on the inside. Let me tell you where we need to go. We must focus on really being clean.

Being really clean. Now to get clean, we have to admit we're dirty. And Jeremiah 17.9 says that we are. It says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately deceitful.

That is the human condition. Apart from God or not right with God, we don't just have bad habits. We're not just mistake prone.

We have a sinful heart. We are sin prone. We are born that way. And we have added to it with the bad habits in our life.

And you may look at me and say, Pastor, who do you think you're talking to? I'm talking to you. And I'm talking to me. And I'm talking to us.

[19:31] This is the state of our circumstances. And I want to be clear about something. Church cannot save you. I just baptized two people in the 20s that grew up in church and got saved in the 20s.

And they realized what had happened to them at an earlier time in their life was not really good. I'm glad you were here. I'd rather you be here than anywhere else in the world for this morning right now.

But I'm going to tell you, the church, the church itself is not going to fix it. They can't save you. Looking right.

And y'all look right. You do. You do. We can't even work our ways out of it. The only hope that we have is a faithful walk in Christ.

Because when it comes to Christ, Christ changes our lives from the inside out. I like the way the prophet Ezekiel put it. He prophesied about such change.

[20 : 43] He's speaking the words of the Lord. He says, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness. And all your idols I will cleanse you.

And I'll give you a new heart and a new spirit I'll put within you. And I'll remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I'll put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes.

And be careful to obey my rules. We cannot be clean outside of the Lord's cleansing. We, in Christ, have become a new creation.

The term is used in 2 Corinthians 5, 17, as I read from the book. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Notice that what that means is that he does not change our heart.

He does not change our spirit. He gives us new life with a new spiritual heart and a new spirit and that spirit being the Holy Spirit.

[21 : 47] And it's only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can walk in his ways in obedience. It's not in us. It's only in him. And you may say, well, Pastor, I'm a Christian, but I'm still struggling with inward thoughts.

Or maybe you're here this morning and you're struggling not only with inward thoughts, but you've got outward actions that have developed from this. One or both of those.

I want you to hear me. Inward thoughts and our outward actions affect every life.

There's not acceptable. That means don't pretend that it don't affect you. It's not acceptable. And you can lie to me.

There's no lie to God about it. It's God's benefit. The other thing that means is, thank God there's hope. Because we're all in the same way.

[23 : 00] And the only one that can save us is Christ Jesus. He's the only hope that we have for those things. Both of those things plague too many Christians.

And Scripture is clear that we can walk away from that. And I'll tell you how we can do that. Romans 12 verse 2 says this. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God.

What is good and acceptable and perfect. My friend, that is real cleansing. It's not pretending. It's not pretending. It's not performing.

It's not looking clean. It's about not washing the outside while neglecting the inside.

It's instead about walking before the Lord really clean. Really clean. It's not working. It's not working. And I don't want the evil one.

[24 : 07] I don't want you to entertain the evil one whispering in your ear to see what is the will of God. because I'll tell you a few truths about that.

One is Christ. Number two is Christ. And whatever jam you're in, wherever your mind is and it shouldn't be, wherever your action is and it shouldn't be, all of that can be reversed.

It's the wonderful grace and mercy and power of the blood of God. It's the only hope we've got, folks. This world is magnificent.

It'll try its best to get you to get more to this place. Suddenly, slowly, like a water, and I'm probably going to get you to slowly turn to the temperature up, making us numb, but it's not again.

But when we serve our lives, and realize I'm curious, and realize for the rest of my days, I'm not going to be good at this.

[25 : 31] For the rest of my days, I will have to be the king. I will not reach a place of Christian maturity where I don't need the Holy Spirit to guide you.

I won't do it. You won't do it. We won't. We have to surrender our lives today and say, from this day to the day, I'm in need. God, I can't.

I need you. Make me clear. You've never given your heart and life to the Lord, even if you've been in this church 20 years, 40 years, 60 years, 80 years.

You've never given your heart and life to the Lord. You'll save me. Today, the day of salvation.

You've stripped your life to the Lord Jesus today. Lord, I can't do this.

I need you to forgive me to come into my life, okay? He'll meet you where you are. God's speaking to you about that. You can come down to silence. Just a moment when we stand and sing. You just

come.

[26 : 36] Be here. Maybe you're here this morning, and you know you have done that, but you've never acknowledged that. You've had business like you saw a little while ago. That's a step of obedience. It ought to be the first step of obedience.

It's after your decision drives. And if you don't do that, it's a hindrance to your home with God. I promise you. I've seen it. You often say, it's a hindrance. Because it's a step of obedience to you. If you've never done that, I encourage you to come.

Maybe God's drawing you to pick up the First Baptist Church. God's doing wonderful things here, and I thank God for that. And if God's leading you to be a part of that, you come. We'll guide you. I'm at that. Maybe you're here this morning, and you just need to do business with God.

You need to lay your thoughts down before the Lord. You need to lay your actions down before the Lord. You need to recommit your life today and say, Lord, for this day, I want to be transformed by the renewal of my mind through your word and prayer through my dependence upon you today.

Don't leave here today. You're not busy. You're not busy. You're not busy. Heavenly Father, I love you. I thank you for your word, and I ask your God today that we'll respond to you and to you.

[27 : 50] Jesus Christ. Amen.