



Sermon: IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE THAT COUNTS WITH JESUS!

- Pastor Todd Goldschmidt

Sunday Service 9:30 am – September 2, 2012 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

Mark 7:14-23

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

¹⁴ 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.’^[a]”

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

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.’”

Footnotes:

- a. [Mark 7:15](#) Some early manuscripts ‘unclean.’ ¹⁶ *If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.*



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The blockbuster movies *Iron Man* and *Iron Man 2* have an interesting premise. Tony Stark—who is Iron Man and becomes one with his iron man suit—has an electromagnet implanted in his chest. It's there to keep shrapnel in his body away from his heart—keeping him alive—but it also powers his suit. The irony is that the palladium core that runs the electromagnet is slowly poisoning him. In other words, what keeps his heart alive is also killing him. We might draw a parallel between his situation and Jesus' statement that "from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly." The sin within our hearts is killing us from the inside out.

Jesus spoke the short parable of our text in response to the Pharisees' assertion that He and His disciples ate with "unclean hands" because they didn't perform the ceremonial washings prescribed by Israel's elders before a meal. The Pharisees were far more concerned with outward appearances than they were with inner purity. Prior to our text, Jesus told them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" Jesus confronts these Pharisees—and us—with a startling truth: the problem of human corruption can't be cleaned up from the outside. It's an inward problem. It is entirely possible for these Pharisees—and us—to discipline ourselves in our prayer habits, worship attendance, eating and drinking patterns, sexual behavior, social graces and generous giving to the extent that we come across as righteous in the eyes of God and man—all the while struggling with monsters of corruption in our thought life. We look good on the outside, but horribly disfigured on the inside.

This is the misunderstanding of the Pharisees' religion or of any religion that takes sin seriously. They all attempt to reform the visible result of sin—its outward appearance—without treating the internal corruption of mankind's sinful nature. It's a failure to recognize that we're in desperate need of help when it comes to our spiritual predicament. Paul's words to the Ephesians ring all too true for each of us when he writes by inspiration of God's Spirit: "But as for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins" (2:1). The problem we face is that we can restrain our outward behavior while retaining all of our evil thoughts. We've changed our appearance, but not our hearts. But God sees what goes on inside us as plain as day. The writer of Hebrews assures us that "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (4:13). How terrifying is that!



When we compare our thought patterns to the unchanging standard of God’s moral law as He’s articulated it for us in “The Ten Commandments,” we realize how depraved we are by nature. We’re corrupt to the core! Who of us here this morning would like to have their innermost thoughts exposed for the rest of us to get a gander at? Not me! The writer to the Hebrews also asserts: “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” My “thoughts and attitudes” are frequently out of line with God’s will. I suspect yours are, too. If God were to judge us based on that alone—never mind our sinful words and actions—we’d fry in hell forever!

Yet, hypocritically, we often judge others. We see a married man we know holding hands with a woman half his age—not his wife, mind you—and we frown in disapproval, yet we fail to see what’s going on in our own hearts when we flip the remote back to the channel we shouldn’t be watching. We see a guy driving a fancy sports car that costs almost as much as our house and think to ourselves, “What an egocentric spendthrift” while failing to admit that we’re envious because we’ll never be able to afford a luxury automobile like that. We see the story in the paper or online about the triple shooting and wonder, perhaps aloud, “How insane!” and yet we can’t see how our being angry at a fellow church member is just as much murder in God’s eyes. To us Jesus says: “How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Luke 6:42).

If the problem of sin is an inward problem, it must be treated with an inward solution. Jesus’ audience in Mark 7 had outward “solutions” to the problem, yet their unclean thoughts remained. By nature, we’re no different. We look great on the outside, but not on the inside—like a ravishing beauty or a handsome hunk dying of an undiagnosed, incurable disease with no apparent symptoms. The old radio show, *The Shadow*, always began by asking: “Who knows what evil lurks within the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!” But The Shadow really wasn’t omniscient. Jesus is. And so He “called the crowd to him and said, ‘Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. 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.’” And Jesus reads our thoughts like an open book. Imagine how sad it must make Him when we act like so much like the Pharisees of old.

Summer Sunday Worship Service: 9:30 A.M. (June thru September 2nd)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

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It takes something completely outside us to wash us clean on the inside. God looked into His heart, not ours, to devise a plan for our salvation. Actually, it was a plan He set in motion from before Creation. In His divine foreknowledge He saw each future earthly day as though it had already occurred, from the “In the beginning day” to the “day he will judge the living and the dead by the man he has appointed”—none other than the very One He sent to accomplish our salvation in the first place: Jesus, the Christ. Thank God this morning that He’s the One who will judge you, because He’s the One who has saved you from your sins and reconciled you to His Father. He’s the One who has cleansed you from the inside out! He’s washed you clean in the sacred waters of your baptism, uniting you to Him by Spirit-worked faith in that gracious act. He continues to forgive your sins on a daily basis, as you come to Him confessing your guilt and clinging to His cross alone for pardon. He calls you regularly to “take and eat” His “true body” and to “take and drink” His “blood of the new covenant” poured out for you for in His Supper.

Through these merciful Means of Grace, God continues to “pour out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us” as Paul puts it in Romans 5:5. In that same chapter, Paul assures us that when our goose was cooked, Christ came to the rescue! He writes: “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (vv. 6-8).

Friends, that’s love! That’s love beyond all human comprehension! That’s the love we needed to cleanse us from the inside out, the love we needed to restore our broken relationship with God, the love we need to empower our love for others so that instead of judging them by their outward appearance we look deeper to their inward need for the same amazing grace that we enjoy as those who have been sainted in God’s sight! Even our faith in Christ is a free gift from God! And a heart of faith—a heart like yours and mine—is a clean heart, purified of the sin within. It’s a heart that receives eternal life. You know the old adage, “The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” I suppose there’s some truth to that, in the sense in which it’s intended. But the way to a pure heart is through the cleansing blood from the heart of Christ. Do you know someone who hasn’t discovered that truth yet? Someone who still needs to learn that God loves him or her *because* they’re sinful to the core and can only be rescued by their Savior Jesus? How about introducing them to that One who has cleansed you from the inside out? Amen.

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