

“What really defiles?”

Mark 7:1-23

Introduction

- Today we are looking at what really defiles
 - The Pharisees thought they understood what made someone unclean before the Lord
 - They thought they had it all figured out and they were going to help Jesus understand
- But of course Jesus had total command of what really defiles men and women
 - And He has something to share with them
- Because this is important to God. He doesn't want us, He doesn't want His kids to be defiled
 - Everyone of us have had those experiences which just leave us feeling gross, disgusting, defiled

As a high pastor I had a really good job. I would spend most of my days either studying the Bible or eating with kids. No worry about the direction of the church or really serious problems happening in families, nope - just Bible and eating with kids. And normally that was wonderful, but one day I was eating some pizza with a young man whose girl friend had just told him to pack sand, to get lost and I was trying to cheer him with some self deprecating humor. I told him, man I know how you feel on this one, girls were breaking up with me all the time when I was your age, but that was because I was such a dweeb. And he laughed in agreement, yeah you are a dweeb, which I didn't appreciate very much – I was trying to cheer the kid up but let's not be cold hearted. But I gathered myself and my wounded pride and said, but I don't expect getting dumped by a girl to happen to someone so good looking as you – and this kid starts laughing again and I was pretty pleased and amused with my ability to lift him out of the dumps, but then this piece of chewed up pizza from deep inside his stomach, came back up his throat, out his mouth and landed on my face. I was no longer amused. I felt defiled.

- I didn't know how to play that off

You know when some is talking to you and a little piece of spit flies out of their mouth, that is easy to over look

- But this was a lugsy covered piece of sausage pizza

I felt sick

- it didn't help this guy just agreed with me that I was dweeb

I felt sick, I felt defiled

- I felt like I needed a long bath or shower
 - And I bring this up because all of us at times in our lives have felt this way
 - We did something, we were involved in some sin, some sin was done to us or someone spit lugsy covered sausage pizza on our face (sorry I had to say that one more time, because I am going to go on a limb and say those words have never been utter in this sanctuary before)
- But something happened to you that made you feel defiled

I bring this up because this is how the Pharisees truly believed Jesus was allowing His to be, defiled, dirty, separated from God because of the way they were washing their hands

- Let's review the problem the Pharisees had with Jesus and His disciples starting in verse one of Mark chapter 7

Mark 7:1-5

The Pharisees watched the Disciples eat and they thought – aw, lugs covered sausage pizza! – They are being defiled because they are not keeping the traditions of the elders

- now listen – traditions are interesting things – sometimes they can be wonderful
 - the family comes by for Christmas or Thanksgiving – naps on Sunday afternoon!

But many times our traditions begin and we have no idea why we do what we do, but you better not deviate, because it is a “tradition”

- I think one of my favorite traditions to demonstrate this is during the reformation. John Calvin was a preacher in Geneva and if you have even seen pictures of John Calvin, every one of them, young or old, he is wearing this pointy hat

○ **I mean every single picture – pictures of John Calvin**

And the reason every picture of John Calvin has this hat is because when he preached, he preached every single sermon in that hat

- Well after years of this, the men in his church all started wearing this same hat
 - And after years of all the men in the church wearing this same hat, the thinking was there was something deep and spiritual about wearing a Calvin Hat – where Calvin Klein came from –just kidding
- Well as always happens the younger people in Calvin’s church questioned that – “why do I need to wear that hat, I don’t want to wear a hat” – but son, you need to realize there is a deep spiritual significance in the hat – what dad? – what deep spiritual significance?

Well one day one of these conversations were happening outside the church and John Calvin walked by in his hat

- so the Dad asked – Mr. Calvin, could you explain to my son why you wear your hat?
 - And John Calvin said, sure, “I started wearing the hat because it is very drafty in that church and my head gets cold and more importantly a family of pigeons have made a nest right above the pulpit and so the hat protects my head from poop – I love it!!!!

We do so much in our lives because of tradition, but we don’t really know where the traditions came from

- and this was true in Jesus’ day with these so called “Traditions of the elders”
 - you see when the Pharisees said to Jesus, your disciples are not washing before they eat
 - please don’t think this was a hygiene issue, I’m sure the disciples washed their hands before they ate
- But what they were not doing was washing their hands in the tradition of the elders

Which said you were to take one and a half egg shells of water – not one egg shell now, not two egg shells, one and a half egg shells of water

- And you were then to hold out your hands, up and out – praying at a angle
 - The water has to drip off your wrist
 - Don’t let it go down your arms or you would have to start over
- Next you would hold your hand down and out
 - Take another One and half eggs shells, not one, not two, one and half
 - And hold your hands, down and out
 - Let the water drip off your fingers
- Then you were to hold your fingers out, taken another egg shell and a half of water, not one, not two, but one and half and pour that water over your fingers

- That was the washing of hands described in the Tradition of the elders

Jesus didn't have any part of that foolishness

- a little water, scrub, scrub, scrub
 - and they were ready to go

Now this shocked the Pharisees because the disciples were violating the tradition of the elders

- now before we go any further – so you students understand

The Tradition of the Elders was supposedly a list of oral laws, which God had supposedly given to Moses which he passed on to the elders of his day, who then passed it on to the next generation

- It was supposedly an explanation of what was simply in the Word, Exodus chapter 30 – “Have them wash their hands”
 - God's Word is simple, wise and hygienic, long before doctors figured out this was good – the Word said, “Wash your hands”

But that was not enough for religious people, so they said, though we have no record this is true, they said, God explained to Moses what He really meant, and Moses passed that on to the elders of his day, and they passed it on to the next generation

- And the problem was by the time Jesus was alive, these traditions were valued even above the written word of God

So the rumor goes out – Jesus has disciples who don't take an egg shell and a half of water and dump that over their hands, down their hands and then over the fingers

- go see if this is true, they say in Jerusalem
 - and a team heads up to Galilee and lo and behold its true
 - these guys just scrub and eat – aw – they are so defiled
- So these Pharisees confront Jesus – why do you not have your disciples wash like the elders say to wash, why are you allowing your guys to be defiled

Now Jesus is going to use this occasion, this confrontation to teach His boys, these Pharisees and you and me what really defiles a man

- Do we need to wash our hands with an egg shell and a half of water to be holy before God?
 - Do we need to hold to the tradition of the elders in order to have God's heart?
- Well Jesus' opinion is no way!
 - And Jesus is going to show them this, by explaining to them two things that really defile you and me
 - They really separate us from the blessing of God in our lives

What really defiles a man?

#1 – Elevating Man's word over God's – Mark 7:6-13

- Jesus says to these guys, for their learning and for ours
 - You think because we don't go through your little weird procedures that we are separated from God
 - And they really did

Rabbi Eliezer said in the Mishnah, a collection of Jewish writings, “He who expounds the Scriptures in opposition to the tradition of the Elders has no share in the world to come.”

- They really believed if you didn't follow this, you were separated from God

But Jesus is sharing, you're crazy

- what really separates people from God is number, one hypocrisy
 - your elevating what some man has said above the Word of God
 - making the Word of God of no effect

What Jesus is saying is because you are holding up what these elders have to say as so important, you are missing what the Word of God has to say

- And you can almost hear their collective gasp – what??? What did He say?? – We don't honor the Word of God because we honor the traditions of the elders
 - No we don't – no we don't
 - The Writings of the elders makes us better followers of God's word
- So Jesus gives an example

He says, every one of you know the Word of God is clear – you are to honor your father and mother

- and all of you know that means caring for them as they get older
 - that's basic Bible stuff

But because of your devotion to the writings of the elders, you have a way to not do that

- The tradition of the elders had a law called the Corban law – it said that if you dedicated your money to the Lord you were free from the obligation of taking care of your parents when they were old, or taking care of the poor
 - **“Corban” – dedicated to God, or gifted to God**
- So these Pharisees would have parents come by, I am hungry son I need some help, they would have poor people come by, can you spare some change
 - And they would say – Mom, Dad, I would love to help, you know how I honor you, but my money is Corban, it is dedicated to God and so therefore I literally have nothing to give you, because everything I have is the Lord

And I can just see them so piously walking away thinking, I am so glad I understand the writings of the elder, that my stuff is dedicated to God – this is authentic Judaism

And that would be bad enough, but to make things worse – under “Corban”, while your money was, “dedicated” to the Lord – you could still use it on yourself

- You could still go out to dinner, buy a boat, drive a new car or a horse in their day
 - You could spend every bit of it on you
 - But when you died – the buck fifty you had left in your account, that went to the temple, because your money was dedicated to God
- Meanwhile, his starving parents and starving poor people were out in the cold, because my money is dedicated to God
 - Authentic Judaism
 - Jesus was saying – no, no its not – its hypocrisy
- Because of your devotion to the Writings of the Elders, you are missing the simple command of the Word
 - Honor your Father and Mother
 - Take care of them when they are old
- Jesus says, “you are ones who are defiled”

You see at the core of what the Pharisees were doing and why it was so dangerous and defiling is they were substituting a right relationship with God as simply outlined in His Word with something else that made them feel better about not really walking with God

- they weren't really obeying the Lord and in their heart they knew that to be true, but at least in their minds, man I really follow the traditions, I really know the

writings and it gives me a greater understanding of what authentic Judaism really is

- these simple Bible people are missing it, giving money to Mom and Dad – ha, if they only knew the writings of the elders

But the defilement continues because not only were they substituting something for their personal holiness (doesn't matter that we don't honor our parents because we wash our hands and understand Corban) that would be bad enough, but they were also eroding the power of the Word of God in other people's lives

- notice the progression

Eroding the Power of the Word of God

- Verse 7 – they put the Writings of the Elders on the same level as God's Word
- Verse 8 – that led to laying aside God's Word
- Verse 9 – that led to rejecting God's Word
- Verse 13 – that led to robbing God's Word of its power

And that is why Jesus says, you think you aren't defiled, you are defiled

- The Pharisees would say "We are righteous, we are right on with God"
 - Jesus would say "No your not – Your hypocrites
 - Making the Word of God of no effect in your lives and in your culture because you are so given to the Writings and Traditions of the elders

Wow you are pretty fired up about this Jason, even for you.

- I mean I get it – these Pharisees were so given to the Writings of the elders that it eroded the simple power of the Word of God in their lives and in the lives of others
 - So Jesus says, I'm not defiled you are
 - But why are you so fired up – I mean we don't do that – this is interesting history this morning, but this is not a real danger I am facing
- Well maybe you are not – praise the Lord

But I can't tell you how many conversations I have had with young people, my age and younger recently – wonderful people, wonderful Christians, but my concern is the conversation goes like this...

- "well I know what the Word of God says that, but have you interpreted that though what the early church father's wrote in the first and second century
 - what? – well the Word says this, but the early church Fathers said this
 - and you really can't understand the Bible until you understand what the people who lived near that time had to say about it
 - I seem to have that conversation every week
- Oh if you simple bible people would just understand the importance of the church Fathers in first and second century

Now listen – I have no problem with people who want to learn more about the background of the Bible and study the Writings of church fathers

- But what we can't forget is by the time the book of Revelation was written, which was in the first century, if you read chapters 2 and 3 and those letters Jesus wrote to the churches in the first century, they were messed up
 - They had left their first love –
 - They were lukewarm, carnal
 - They were involved in sexual immorality and idolatry
- In fact Jesus describes one church as blind to what God was doing and saying – as bad as any church

So here is all I'm saying – we can fall right back into the issue the Pharisees were facing – elevating what man says to the same level as what God says - but

the danger is in the process we always seem to knock the simple word of God down and rob it of its life changing effect

I have had people say to me in just the last few weeks

- oh those simple people at Calvary Chapel – they would be so much more effective if they made people get a license and be officially trained before they could teach the Bible
 - And I believe these people love God and think they are defending “authentic Christianity”, they think they are defending the true Word of God

But what really is happening is we are putting other things on the same level as God’s Word

- and always be followed by laying aside the simple reading of God’s Word and believing what it says – as one fellow seminary student of mine said, “I just have a hard time reading the scriptures anymore, because I don’t know that I understand them”
 - and that if we are not careful will be followed by the Word of God losing its power in our hearts and in our culture

I will never forget that when I started in this thing called ministry I was untrained and uneducated

- oh I had two years of Bible college which sound really official but I compare it to a two year camp of just falling in love with Jesus – I’m sure they taught it but I don’t remember learning anything about doctrine or theology
 - and yet afterward this guy who simply loved God, loved His Word, was given a chance to serve here at Calvary Chapel Vista and as I learned the Word for myself and taught it to others, we had a pretty amazing youth group
- then I moved to Texas and I had no business starting a church – I had no idea what I was doing, but we just opened up this book and let it affect hearts and hundreds of people got saved

I’m glad no one told me, I needed a license to preach the gospel first

- I’m so glad no one told me, that I probably shouldn’t read the scriptures, because without the proper education you really can’t understand the scriptures
 - No – I just believed that there was power in the simple Word of God taught Simply

And I’ll tell you I have gone back to school now, not because I am dissatisfied with this book, but I want to communicate to these contemporaries of mine in their own language what I have always known in my heart to be true, that simply as it stands there is nothing like this book

- and over the past year and half now - I have read more books, I have learned more about Greek Culture, Egyptian Culture, Roman Culture, first Century Culture, I have read church fathers and first century historians
 - and I will tell you - I would still take one man or women who loves God, loves His Word and is committed to getting that Word into people’s hearts and minds than any army of scholars who in years haven’t taken the Bible to the beach and just wept over the words of life contained in this book

Precious men and women, especially you young men and women, there is nothing wrong with wanting to know more about the Bible, I commend you for that

- but if you really want to be an expert in theology, (the study of God) or ecclesiology (the study of the church) or soteriology (the study of salvation) – I know all these fancy words now

- but you listen to old pastor Jason – you want to learn those things – you become an expert in this book

You read the scriptures, you commit yourself to know the scriptures, to live the scriptures, believe the scriptures – let them effect the way you think and talk and prioritize your life, because there is nothing like this book, just as it stands

- this book is profoundly simple and simply profound
 - and wise is the man or woman that is given to this book

Paul said...

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” – II Corinthians 11:3

David said...

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;” – Psalm 19:7

“Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stands in the path of sinners nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in it does he meditate day and night. He will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water who brings forth fruit in its season, whose leaf does not wither and whatever he does shall prosper.” – Psalm 1:1-3

- that is what I desire
 - that is the opposite of being defiled

What really defiles a man?

#1 – Elevating Man’s word over God’s – Mark 7:6-13

#2 – What we put in our hearts, not our mouths – Mark 7:14-23

William Barclay, the Great British Bible scholar called the verses we just read “The most revolutionary passage in all of the New Testament” – picture and quote

- And it is not just great Bible teachers who feel this way, the disciples are a little taken back by what Jesus says, “They ask Him, could you explain this parable” – this can’t be a real teaching, so explain your parable

But this was no parable, it was a straightforward truth about what defiles a man or a woman

- but as you can understand, it flew in the face of everything they taught in Judaism
 - if you touch this, you are defiled
 - if you eat this, you are defiled
 - everything defiled you
- Jesus explains why it’s not about what you eat
 - or who you bump up against
 - or what dirt gets on your feet
- God has developed purging systems in our body to get rid of impurities in food, and germs in the air

But what really defiles you, Jesus says is what goes into heart

- the things that we allow to go in there are not as easily purged as bad meat or rotten eggs
 - it stays in there – influencing the way you speak, the way you think, decisions you make

And we need to see this because again, we can say oh this doesn't apply to our culture but it totally does, the other conversation I get into all the time is not about reading the church fathers, it's about purifying the Christian diet

- Now don't misunderstand me – I'm going to get some email on this study I know – but listen before you run out - there's nothing wrong with being healthy

I am really trying, simply because I want to be around as long as God wants me to preach His Word and be there for my family – I am trying to exercise 3 or 4 times a week, I am trying to watch what I eat

- Nothing wrong with that
 - What is wrong is when like the Pharisees have an overemphasis on what I put in my mouth and very little thought to what I put in my heart
 - And again we can sound so pious when we say these things

About six months ago I had a young man watching me drink a diet coke and he said to me, I would rather my pastor be in bondage to pornography than to diet soda

- and I thought he was kidding so I laughed, but then I realize he wasn't kidding
 - And so I said to him really? – I don't think my wife would agree with you? – She shortsighted!
 - I don't think God would agree with you?
- Yes – He would – Don't you know the scripture says, "Your body is a temple"
 - I do know that scripture
 - It says in full context...

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." – I Corinthians 3:16-17

- God seems to talking about guarding your body from sin's defilement, not Diet Coke defilement
 - The Holy Spirit dwells there, Paul says, what quenches the Spirit? – Food??? – Sin!!!
 - What makes us Unholy? – Food??? – Sin!!!

And again I am not defending drinking diet soda or eating lots of red meat, I know I should do those things, but what I hoping you see, is far more important is what you are putting in your heart

- because we focus so much on what we put in our mouth
 - Red meat – yuck – Sodas – I wouldn't do that to my system
- But the same person will sit in front of the TV for hours horribly defiling their soul without a second thought

We often have such a warped view on things

- Peter, steeped in Judaism at first didn't get it – explain this parable to us again
 - And Jesus basically says, "It not a parable, it's the truth" – they value so much what physically goes into their bodies, but give not a thought to what spiritual is being put in their – and because of that they are defiled

So with you and me – often times we don't get it, so steeped in the value system of the world

- I eat tofu, so my body is not defiled
 - What's going in the heart????
- Father's what are allowing to defile your home?

- Mothers – you who force feed vegetables to your kids because it’s good for them, and it is – but what do you turn a blind eye to that your kids are spiritually feeding on
 - Thinking I don’t want to impose
 - you’re a parent – that’s your job

But this is not just for your kids – you, Mom and Dad, you Grandma and Grandpa, you high school student

The care can’t just be – oh that’s bad for my blood pressure, that is bad for my cholesterol, or that is going to affect my beach body – nothing wrong with that

- but do you care how your heart is affected by the things you watch, listen to, download and stream
 - Because Jesus is saying – that is what is really important!!!
 - That is what can truly defile you – not for 20 years, not for this year’s beach season
 - But that other stuff, that can affect your heart forever
- So often we worry about the wrong things

Nothing wrong with being concerned with what you eat – the problem comes when I am so concerned about what touches my mouth, but have no concern for what touches my heart

- for the scriptures – we have such good ideas except we have to deal with those pesky scriptures that say
 - Solomon says, **“Keep your heart with all diligence, (guard your heart) for out of it spring the issues of life” – Proverbs 4:23**
- Well what did that really mean to ancient Hebrew culture – it meant, Keep your heart with all diligence for out if spring the issue of life”

What truly defiles?

- the Pharisees would say, what you eat, not valuing what the Writings of elders say
 - Jesus would say – not really
 - Its moving away from a simple adoration and obedience to the greatest thing that has ever been written
 - And caring more about what touches your lips that what touches your heart
- So as we end today – lets reflect on that
 - What has been allowed to defile your heart?
- Have you moved away from simply reading, living the Word