



## READ MARK 7:1-23

### Pursue

- In this story, the Pharisees point toward outside things as the things that defile (or make unclean) a person. This defilement means those who are dirty can not enter the presence of God ritually. The Pharisees of the time created further boundaries to protect themselves from possible defilement. They required all to adhere to their traditions/boundaries lest they be shamed and excluded from their ritual practices.
  - In today's culture, what outside things do Christians tend to point out as defilers?
    - Like the Pharisees, in what ways do we demand that others adhere to our cultural traditions/boundaries?
  - In today's culture, what outside things do the broader culture point out as defilers?
    - Like the Pharisees, in what ways does our culture demand that others adhere to their cultural traditions/boundaries?
  - God uses meditation on the Word, prayer, and community to help us discern what is godly, true, faithful, and wise so that we might encourage brothers and sisters towards those things rather than our own traditions.
    - How was your time in the Word and prayer this week?
      - If it was good, what is one thing the Lord revealed about himself, and how did you respond?
      - If this was a struggle this week, what is one step you could take to grow in this area?
- In contrast, Jesus describes people's defilement as an inside-out problem rather than an outside-in problem. In this small section of the text, he mentions the heart three times and points towards it as the well of defilement for humanity (v. 21).
  - How does understanding the rottenness of man's heart help you understand your sin?
  - Is there an area of sin or temptation you are currently facing that you more easily point toward outside influences? In what ways does your heart contribute to this area of temptation or sin?

### Practice

- **Confession & Repentance** - In our text today, we saw that it is not outside things that defile us but rather the innermost part of our personhood, the heart, that is the root of our defilement. This means that we depend on God to change our hearts, initially in salvation and ongoingly in sanctification. (Ezekiel 36:24-28) We examined how our hearts contribute to a current temptation or sin in the previous question. Splitting into smaller groups or pairs, with the help of the Spirit, practice confession & repentance with one another.
  - Repentance is the response of recognizing, grieving, and turning away from sin and to Jesus. Repentance is a gift from God that the Holy Spirit gives us through Jesus Christ. Repentance is an invitation into grace!

- Begin your time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help you respond in true repentance. Ask Him to help you recognize your sin as sin against God first and His creation (others, yourself, etc.) second. Ask Him to give you godly sorrow over your sin and to grant you the gift of repentance.
- Spend time confessing to your prayer partner the specific ways you have been tempted or walked in sin in this particular area of your life. Acknowledge the ways this can or has affected your relationship with God and with others.
- Spend time in prayer asking for forgiveness, healing, and wisdom as you consider what active repentance will look like in this area. Finally, spend time in prayer thanking him for His work in you, for the forgiveness, mercy, and grace found only in Jesus.
- Spend time discussing what active steps you can take to turn away from this sin and move toward Jesus. Be specific; when will you take these steps? Is there anyone you need to make amends to because of this sin? What will accountability look like, etc.?
- Close in prayer, asking the Spirit to help you walk in grace-fueled obedience as a response to God's loving forgiveness rather than white-knuckle obedience.

## **Proclaim**

- At the beginning of this series, we encouraged people to choose one person this semester that they would pray for and share with. Encourage group members in this relationship. What is something you learned, was convicted of, or encouraged by that you will share this week with that person who doesn't have faith in Jesus?