

Introduction

Last week I got a call from a man in Orlando that we have known for about thirty years. He is an evangelist at heart. He was part of Joe Warner's church, but is now helping plant another church. About twenty years ago he and his family visited us in Atlanta, and one morning he made a comment about something Karen had made for breakfast. He said, "This tastes healthy!" His wife was quick to point out that this was not a compliment. Karen made things from scratch. She bought wheat, ground it, and baked our own bread. We lived on our small farm and grew a lot of organic fruits and vegetables. This man knew that we were careful about our diet. When he called this week he told me to tell Karen that they have changed their eating habits and are now eating healthy foods, and that he has actually found some that tastes good. We laughed about it and his comment twenty years ago that he referenced in his remark.

There is a lot of concern today over the foods that we eat. We want to eat healthier foods. We want organic foods, without all the pesticides and fertilizers. We want non-genetically modified foods (non-GMO). We understand that the foods that we eat affect our health. My Primary Care Physician, Dr. Schultz, has a sign in his office that reads, "Whatever problem you have, diet and exercise are part of the solution." We know that diet is extremely important. We do not want to defile our bodies with contaminated or genetically modified foods. I don't think as many people are concerned about their spiritual life as their physical wellbeing. Many people think that if there is a God, He grades on a curve, and they are no better or worse than anyone else. They are okay when they compare their lives with the lives of those around them.

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees were careful about what they ate. They only ate clean foods. In God's laws, He told us what were clean foods and what were unclean foods. God commanded us to eat meat that came from animals that split the hoof and chewed the cud (Lev 11:1-8). He tells us what seafood is clean and what seafood is not clean (Lev 11:9-12). He tells us what birds we can eat and what birds we can't eat (Lev 11:13-19). He tells us what insects we can eat and which are detestable to us (Lev 11:20-23). The Jews were free to eat any of the clean foods, but they could not eat any unclean foods.

When Daniel and his three friends were taken captive and brought to Persia, they were ordered to eat from the king's food. The Persians had no restrictions on their diet, so they ate pork and other foods that the Jews were prohibited from eating. Daniel made an appeal to the commander of the officials about eating only vegetables instead of the king's choice food and wine. The commander gave Daniel permission on a trial basis. Daniel made the appeal because he did not want to defile himself with foods that were unclean. Rather than ask about every meal and the ingredients, it was better to eat a vegetable diet where there were no chances of defiling themselves or offending the king.

(Dan 1:8) "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself."

In my opinion, it was not the foods that would defile Daniel and his friends; it was disobeying God's laws that would defile us. I believe that disobedience and rebellion still defile us. I believe that God gave laws about what was clean and unclean so that we could live healthier lives. He knew that certain animals were not good for us to eat. I believe He gave these laws so that we would live healthier lives. I believe that God wants us to live an abundant life.

Many Christians now eat all kinds of food because Jesus declared all food to be clean. I believe that we have the right to eat all kinds of food, but, I don't think that all foods are healthy. I believe God had good reasons for telling us not to eat certain foods, and I believe those reasons are still valid today. While we have freedom to eat anything, I encourage people to be wise about their diet and to eat healthy.

Our text today is not about foods, even though in our passage Jesus declared all foods to be clean. The main point of the passage is about what defiles us, and Jesus said that it is not food that defiles us, because it does not go into the heart. It goes into our stomachs and then is eliminated. Jesus said that what defiles us is that which proceeds from the heart, and He gave a whole list of evil things that come out of our hearts. This morning we are going to look at what defiles us. Let's read our passage.

What Defiles A Man

1. It is not what goes in to our bodies that defiles us
2. It is what proceeds out of our hearts that defiles us

(Mark 7:14-23) "After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: {15} there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. {16} [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.] {17} When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. {18} And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, {19} because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He* declared all foods clean.) {20} And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. {21} For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, {22} deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. {23} All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

1. It is not what goes in to our bodies that defiles us

In context, the Pharisees and scribes had come up from Jerusalem looking for a way to destroy Jesus. They wanted to find fault with Him and they saw that His disciples did not go through the ceremonial cleansing of their hands before eating. So, they confronted Jesus about it, and He rebuked them by quoting Isaiah 29:13. He said they were hypocrites, who were worshipping in vain, teaching the precepts of men, and that their hearts were far from God. He gave them another example, of how they made a law about Corban, which meant something dedicated to God. They would use Corban to get out of taking care of their parents, or honoring their parents. Jesus said they violated the commandments of God for the sake of their traditions.

After addressing the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus called the crowd to Him again, and talked to them about what defiles a man. There were probably Pharisees and scribes still in the crowd, but I believe that Jesus is addressing the crowds. Everywhere Jesus went, He attracted crowds. He healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the multitudes, and people were coming from everywhere to see Jesus. The crowd knew what has just transpired, so Jesus is using the opportunity as a "teachable moment." Jesus told the crowd that nothing outside the man can defile him if it goes into him. He said that the things that defile a man are the things that proceed out of a man. In

saying this, I believe that Jesus is referring to the foods that you eat and perhaps the dirty pot, pitcher, cup, or hands. None of these things defile you. This is the context in which it was said.

(Mark 7:14-15) “After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: { 15} there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.”

Verse 16 says, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” It is in brackets because some early manuscripts did not include this. There are a number of verses in Mark like that, and this is one of them. The NIV and the ESV do not include this verse, but the NASB and KJV include it. Some scholars believe that when it was transcribed, the people that wrote it added their own comments and these comments got added into the text. The NASB and KJV are the two most reliable texts that I know, and they both include it. There is nothing theologically wrong with the statement. Moses made the same statement in Deuteronomy 29:4. Ezekiel said the same thing. Jesus said it in Matthew 11:15, and it is not in brackets there. Jesus also said it in Mark 4:9 and 4:23. In the parable of the soils in Luke 8:8, Jesus said it. He also said it when talking about salt in Luke 14:35. So, there is nothing wrong with the saying, it is just whether it was said at that particular incident. God wants us to hear and understand what He is trying to teach us about what defiles us and what does not defile us.

(Mark 7:16) ["If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."]

(Deut 29:4) “Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.”

(Ez 12:2) “Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.”

(Matt 11:15) “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

(Mark 4:9) “And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

(Mark 4:23) “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

(Luke 8:8) “Other *seed* fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.” As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

(Luke 14:35) “It (salt) is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

After addressing the crowd, He entered a house, where His disciples questioned Him about what He had just taught the crowds. That was Jesus’ pattern. He explained everything privately to His disciples. Small group ministry is really important so that people can ask questions and get things explained privately. Small groups are a safe place to ask these questions. In larger settings, people won’t ask these types of questions because they don’t want to look stupid.

Jesus went on to explain what defiles a man. He said the foods that we eat go into our stomach and are eliminated, so they cannot defile us. They can’t defile us because they don’t go into our

hearts; they go into our stomach and are eliminated. Thus, He declared all foods clean. I might add that He did not say that all foods are healthy to eat; He just said that they don't defile us. The foods we eat do not enter into our heart, and it is our hearts that are defiled and defile us. Jesus was concerned about our hearts.

(Mark 7:18-19) "And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, {19} because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He* declared all foods clean.)"

2. It is what proceeds out of our hearts that defiles us

Then, Jesus said that it is the things that come out of our hearts that defile us. Sin is a heart problem and the things that come out of our hearts defile us. This was a difficult thing for the Pharisees to hear. They regarded themselves as righteous. They did not see themselves as having unclean hearts. They regarded tax collectors and other people as sinners, who had sin problems, but they were clean in their own eyes.

(Mark 7:20) "And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man."

In Matthew 23 Jesus gives eight woes. In verses 25-26, the fifth woe, He told them they cleaned the outside of the cup and dish but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. He told them to clean the inside of the cup and dish, so that the outside could become clean. Jesus was telling them they had a heart problem. They had unclean hearts.

(Matt 23:25-26) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. {26} You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also."

In verses 27-28, He again calls them hypocrites and tells them that they are like whitewashed tombs which are beautiful on the outside, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. They appear to be righteous on the outside, but inwardly they are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Jesus is telling them that they had a heart problem. Their hearts were unclean and sinful and the things coming out of their hearts defiled them.

(Matt 23:27-28) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. {28} So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance. Lots of people were hearing the message and were getting baptized and confessing their sins. However, the Pharisees did not see that they had a need to repent, and they did not get baptized by John. So, they rejected God's purpose for themselves and did not get baptized by John. They had no need of it; they were already righteous in their own eyes.

(Mark 1:5) “And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”

(Luke 7:30) “But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.”

Jesus also preached repentance. In Luke 5:32 He said, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” In Mark 2:17, the Pharisees grumbled about Jesus associating with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus replied to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

(Luke 5:32) "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

(Mark 2:17) “And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, "*It is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Jesus’ message went against how they saw themselves. This goes against how many people see themselves today. We compare ourselves against other sinners and think we are okay. We have to compare ourselves to a holy God, there is no one righteous in His sight. The reason that Jesus came was to wash our sins away and to give us a clean heart. It is only by the sacrifice made by Jesus that our sins were atoned for. It is only by the covenant with God that we are made righteous. Outside of Christ, no one can stand before God.

Jesus gave a list of things that come from our hearts: evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. Did He leave anything out? That covers about every kind of sin imaginable, and all of it comes out of our hearts. These are the things that defile us, not the foods that we eat, with or without clean pitchers, pots, pans, or hands.

(Mark 7:20-23) “And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. {21} "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, {22} deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. {23} "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

Conclusion and Applications

The message today is pretty simple. The things that we eat go into our stomach, not our hearts, and they do not defile us. The things that come out of our hearts; these defile us. The words that come out of our mouths and the things we do all come out of our hearts. The key is to have clean hearts. We have to clean the inside of the cups so that the outside will be clean also.

Danny Jones, who was the Pastor at Metro Life Church in Orlando, once said that our hearts are like a tube of toothpaste. Whenever it gets squeezed, whatever is inside comes out. The pressures in life often reveal things in our lives that need to be dealt with. Whatever is in our hearts will come out. We have heart problems. The things that get squeezed out of us just reveal that we have a heart problem.

Jeremiah prophesied about our hearts. He said that our heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Paul made it clear in Romans 3:23, that all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All of us have a sin problem.

(Jer 17:9) “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

(Rom 3:23) “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

In Romans 6, Paul said that we were slaves of sin, but then he encouraged us by saying, “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” We were freed from sin by God forgiving us of our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. We were made holy through a covenant with God through Jesus’ blood. God is the only one that can forgive us of our sins and clean our hearts. The Pharisees had rejected the Messiah, the only one that could give them a clean heart. They did not see themselves as sick, needing a physician, but they had heart problem that needed healing.

(Rom 6:17-18) “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, {18} and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

I love out the prophet Ezekiel describes salvation and the cleansing of our hearts. He said, “*When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.*” (Ez 11:18-20) When we repent and turn to God, He takes out the heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh. He puts His Spirit inside of us. When we come into a covenant with God, we become His people and He becomes our God. He gives us the ability to walk in His statutes and ways because He cleanses our hearts and gives us a heart that is soft and pliable. Without Christ, we have a heart of stone that is unclean and incapable of walking in God’s statutes. The starting point for all of us is salvation. God forgives us and gives us a new heart.

When we receive Christ and His forgiveness, we have begun a new walk. Paul told the Corinthians “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. We are born again and we are now saints. The old life passes away and new things come. But it is a process. The term that is used by theologians is progressive sanctification. We have to renew our minds and that is a process.

(2 Cor 5:17) “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

I have had people come to me who had a problem with swearing and cursing. They have asked me for help in cleaning up their language. To me, it is a heart problem. They need their hearts renewed. Romans 12:2 tells us not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Our minds are part of our heart, and we need our minds transformed. When our minds get transformed, our speech, conduct, and other things get transformed. We have to renew our minds. We could spend the next hour on Romans 12:2, but I only want to give you a quick overview. We have to fill our minds with the Word of God. We have to read the

word. We have to meditate on God's word. We have to look intensely at the Word of God. We have to saturate our minds on God's word. We have to apply God's Word to our own lives. We have to repent of the things in our lives that do not line up with God's word. As we do these things and renew our minds, our lives will be transformed.

On a practical basis, when people come to me with a particular problem, I try to help them find Scriptures that deal with the area that they are struggling with. If they have an anxiety problem, I help them find verses on anxiety, and then tell them to read, memorize, meditate, and apply those verses. If they are having a problem with greed, I help them find verses on greed. If they are having a problem with lust, I find verses that deal with our lusts. It is all part of renewing our minds and letting our lives be transformed.

Finally, our hearts are like computers. If we put garbage in, we get garbage out. We have to be very careful about what we allow into our hearts, because what is in our hearts will come out and the things that proceed from our hearts will defile us. Solomon wrote that we must watch over our hearts with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. We have to be careful to keep those springs of life pure by not allowing impure things into them.

(Pr 4:23) "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it *flow* the springs of life."

Let me ask some final questions. Do you struggle with evil thoughts? Do you struggle with coveting what other people have? Do you struggle with envy, slander, or other sins of the mouth? Do you struggle with lust? God wants us to be free. He sent Jesus to free us from the bondage of sin. Have you come to a place in your life where you have received Christ into your life? Have you asked Him to come in and forgive you of your sins? Have you surrendered your life to Christ by confessing Him to be your Lord? If you have never received Christ, let me encourage you to ask Him to come in to your life this morning. That is God's purpose for your life. The Pharisees rejected God's purpose and did not repent of their self-righteousness. Will you accept God's purpose and plan for your life by receiving Jesus as Your Lord?

Some of you have prayed to receive Christ, but you struggle with some of those things. Let me encourage you to ask God to help you overcome those things. I exhort you to make a commitment before God this morning to renew your mind and set your mind on things above. I encourage you to make a commitment to memorize scripture and to meditate on those scriptures. The truth will set you free. I also encourage you to confess your sins with one another. The Bible tells us to bear one another's burdens. If you are burdened with an area of your life, allow a brother or sister to help you bear that burden until you have been set free.

Let's pray.

Introduction (Lev 11:1-23, Dan 1:8, Mark 7:14-23)

- 1. It is not what goes in to our bodies that defiles us.** (Is 29:13, Mark 7:14-19, Deut 29:4, Ez 12:2, Matt 11:15, Mark 4:9, Mark 4:23, Luke 8:8, 14:35)

- 2. It is what proceeds out of our hearts that defiles us.** (Mark 7:20-23, Matt 23:25-28, Mark 1:5, Luke 7:30, Luke 5:32, Mark 2:17,

Conclusion and Applications (Jer 17:9, Rom 3:23, 6:17-18, Ez 11:18-20, 2 Cor 5:17, Rom 12:2)