

“A Matter of the Heart”
Mark 7:14-23
(Preached at Trinity, March 30, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we began this section dealing with the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. Seeking to entrap Jesus and discredit Him, they accused His disciples of transgressing the tradition of the elders.
 - A. The traditions of the elders were man-made applications to God’s Law. While they began with sincere men striving to obey God’s Law perfectly, by the time of Christ they had ballooned into an impossible list of rules that no one could obey.
 - B. In addition these traditions often had little basis in Scripture and worse, the Scribes and Pharisees considered them of equal value with the Law of God and sometimes even placed them on a higher level than the Law.
 - C. They were binding men’s consciences with things not commanded by God.
2. As we saw last time:
 - I. We must always guard against mere formalism or external religion
Mark 7:6 – “And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.'"
God is not interested in mere external religion
In **Verse 6** Jesus refers to them as hypocrites. External religion is hypocrisy.
It is playacting
 - II. We must be careful that we do not bind men’s consciences with traditions that the Law of God does not command.
Mark 7:7-8 – “But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’⁸ "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”
 - III. We must be careful that we do not set aside the Law of God for the traditions of men.
Mark 7:9 – “He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.”
Jesus was condemning them because they placed greater emphasis on the oral tradition than upon the written Law
Jesus was condemning the Pharisees for “setting aside” (**V.9**) the Law of God.
The word for “setting aside” means to “do away with.”
3. Jesus quotes from Isaiah to describe the Scribes and Pharisees:
Mark 7:6 – “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.'”
 1. He accused them of hypocrisy. The problem with the Scribes and Pharisees was not an issue of zeal or a lack of sincerity.
 2. Their problem was a bad heart.
“This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.”

3. "Their heart is far from me": - While appearing very pious they were actually void of holiness. Their heart was far removed from God.
4. In **Verse 14** – Then Jesus turns to the people and commands them to hear and understand **Mark 7:14** – "He called the multitude to Him again, He *began* saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand:"
 - A. Both words are in the imperative.
In other words He is telling them that they had better listen carefully and make no mistake about what He is about to say.
 - B. Guilt and defilement are issues of the heart. It isn't what goes in but what comes out that defiles a man. That which goes in can neither purify nor defile.
5. This passage does away with strict legalism or ritualism.
 - A. Outward practices of religious tradition can do nothing to make a person inwardly pure.
 - B. Mark also states this as evidence for the end of the OT dietary laws:
Mark 7:19 – "because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*)
6. This was revolutionary for the Jews of Jesus' day. Being right with God is not a matter of a long list of man-made rules and regulations, even if these rules were originally meant to increase holiness. These rules and regulations had evolved into impossible demands that were a tremendous weight. In the process of time the leaders of Israel even placed them above God's Law and even used them as an excuse to disregard God's Law.
7. Our Lord's teaching was so revolutionary that even His disciples failed to make the connection in what He was saying.
God demands worship from the heart. Our relationship with Him is a matter of the heart. It is the heart that God is concerned about.
1 Samuel 16:7 – "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
Tonight I want to direct your attention to some matters of the heart.
- I. First, we need to understand the nature of the human heart
 - A. With the fall of humanity our hearts became grossly corrupted
 1. When we speak of the heart we are talking about the inner-man – the soul, the core of your being. We are talking about the mind, the will, and the emotions. The true person.
William Hendriksen – "In Scripture the heart is the fulcrum of feeling and faith as well as the mainspring of words and actions. It is the root of man's intellectual, emotional, and volitional life, the core and center of man's being, his inmost self."
 2. We can put on a false face before the public. We can smile. We can seem to be good people, but God looks upon our heart.
And our heart will soon demonstrate what we truly are
 3. Jesus says here that what leaves the mouth is far more important than what enters.
James 3:6 – "And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

4. From the heart comes all of our actions. The desires of your heart reveal the condition of your soul.
Proverbs 4:23 – “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.”

B. Jesus says that out of the heart flows all manner of corruption
Mark 7:21-23 – “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. Evil thoughts – this speaks of our mind, the center of our reasoning
2. Fornications – from the word we get “pornography” – it speaks of sexual immorality. To this Jesus adds adultery and sensuality—all that the seventh commandment encapsulates.
3. Thefts – transgressing the 8th Commandment
4. Murders – transgressing the 6th Commandment
5. Deeds of coveting – transgressing the 10th commandment
6. Deceit – transgressing the 9th commandment
7. In other words, from the heart comes all manner of lawlessness, wickedness, malice – from the heart comes envy and pride

C. This is a universal problem

1. It was clearly seen in the days of Noah
 - a. Before the flood God looked upon the earth and saw only prevailing evil
Genesis 6:5 – “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
 - b. Two things are stressed here about man
 - a. His heart was only evil
 - b. His heart was only evil continually
 - c. We read that “all flesh” had corrupted their way
Genesis 6:11-12 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.
 - d. It was characterized by all manner of corruption
There would have been sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, rape and murder, and all other forms of lawlessness.
Just like today.
 - e. Matthew Henry – “Take away conscience and the fear of God, and men become beasts and devils to one another.”
 - f. Chasing the lusts of their hearts, they would have been plagued by materialism and the lust for pleasure.
 - g. There was undoubtedly religion but it was corrupt religion, man centered and full of idolatry

2. This universal wickedness continues to prevail
Psalm 53:2-3 – “God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there is anyone who understands, Who seeks after God. ³ Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.”
Romans 3:10-18 – “as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; ¹⁴ "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ And the path of peace have they not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

II. Second, this stresses the human need of a new heart

- A. This passage is really profound and would have sounded strange to our Lord’s listeners
 1. Jesus is giving a crushing blow to external religion
 2. For the Jews their external practices had become *everything*
 3. Jesus is telling them that the essential issue was what came from within
 4. This is the issue today as well
 - a. Every religion but Christianity deals with external matters – things that are done.
 - b. For many professing Christians this is true for them as well. All emphasis is placed upon what they do.
 5. Biblical Christianity is a matter of the heart. It demand having our minds, our wills, and our emotions captivated by Christ
It demands a new heart
- B. Our old heart cannot be repaired
 1. We read in Jeremiah
NAS **Jeremiah 17:9** – “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”
 - a. The heart is desperately sick – in other words it is incurable
 - b. The wicked heart of man cannot be patched or mended. It cannot be improved. It must be replaced with a new heart
Ezekiel 36:26 - "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."
 2. The stony heart is beyond feeling. It cannot be stirred to love Christ
 3. Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again.”
John 3:3 – “Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
 - a. Without the new birth a person will not love God
 - b. Without the new birth a person will not worship God
 - c. Without the new birth a person will not obey God

- C. God gives us a whole new heart
NAS **2 Corinthians 5:17** – “Therefore if any man is in Christ, *he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*”
1. God renews our mind – He gives us a new way of thinking
 2. He sets our wills and affections upon Him.

Conclusion:

1. Even though we have a new heart it has not yet been perfected. Our hearts are new, yet they still bear remnants of the fall. They are still capable of the corruption of sin.
2. We can see this with the disciples in the previous chapter.
Mark 6:51-52 – “And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished, ⁵² for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.*”
 - A. The disciples had fallen into a spiritual stupor. They failed to give careful attention to the glorious work of Christ.
 - B. We too can fall into a spiritual stupor. This is why we must continue to renew our minds through the careful application of Scripture.
3. But, although our hearts are still impure, they are wondrously different from that of the lost man. May God grant us to demonstrate more and more the reality of our new heart.
Colossians 3:8-10 – “But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him”
4. By God’s grace, be what you are!