

Theme: Jesus teaches us that impurity, which is the violation of God's moral law, arises from inside our hearts rather than from outside sources, and therefore true cleansing is not a matter of external religious rites but rather an internal change of heart.

I. Lilliput, Blefuscu, and the Pharisees

- A. Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels
- B. Traditionally, Lilliputians broke boiled eggs on the larger end; a few generations ago, an Emperor of Lilliput, the Present Emperor's great-grandfather, had decreed that all eggs be broken on the smaller end after his son cut himself breaking the egg on the larger end. The differences between Big-Endians (those who broke their eggs at the larger end) and Little-Endians had given rise to "six rebellions ... wherein one Emperor lost his life, and another his crown". The Lilliputian religion says an egg should be broken on the convenient end, which is now interpreted by the Lilliputians as the smaller end. The Big-Endians gained favour in Blefuscu. (Wikipedia)
- C. Jesus might have viewed the Pharisees like this!
- D. What is really important to God? What does it mean to be truly unclean or clean? How are we cleansed?

II. The Nature of True Impurity

- A. Jesus addresses true vs. false impurity
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.'" Mark 7:14-15
 - 1. Jesus says external things can not make us impure
 - 2. He says true impurity comes from within!

- B. The difference between the Pharisees and Jesus
 - 1. The Pharisees thought impurity came from the outside and thus believed that purity was a matter of following rituals.
 - 2. Jesus said impurity came from the inside, and thus purity is a matter of being changed from the inside out.

III. Jesus Teaches On True Impurity

- A. The disciples are confused - again!
After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸ "Are you so dull?" he asked. Mark 7:17-18
 - 1. In private the disciples again express confusion
 - 2. This has been a theme in the Gospel (see Mark 4)
 - 3. Jesus is shocked they are so dull and without understanding - as we will see, this was all in the Old Testament!
 - 4. There are huge implications for this regarding how we understand the Old Testament law - next week!
- B. Jesus explains true impurity
"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.'" Mark 7:18-23

1. Nothing from the outside makes one 'unclean'
2. Food does not go to the heart, but just to the stomach and then out of the body!
3. What comes out of the body is what is unclean - not excrement but sinful thoughts, actions, dispositions
4. The Pharisees have everything exactly backward!

C. Understanding true impurity

1. Impurity comes from inside, not from outside
 - a. This certainly includes food (v19)
 - b. It also includes being in contact with the broader culture and world (marketplace - v4)
 - c. It also includes associating with "sinners"!
 - d. "They" do not make me unclean - I do!
2. Impurity comes from moral sin, not violating religious trivialities
 - a. This is what Jonathan Swift satirized in Gulliver!
 - b. The dominant themes for the Pharisees - then and now - are following their external rules, and they will crush anyone who does not get in line (thus violating the moral law!)
 - c. Notice the actual "uncleanness" Jesus mentions - all are moral failures! (vv21-22)
3. Impurity comes from breaking God's law, not human standards and traditions
 - a. Notice that the sins Jesus lists are directly contrary to God's moral law - murder, sexual sin, lying, slandering our neighbor, etc.

- b. One can keep all of the "traditions" and follow societal standards - and still be unclean because of violating God's moral law!
 - c. One can break human standards and still be 'clean' because the motives and actions follow God's Law!
 - d. This was why Jesus first dealt with the source of moral authority as we saw last week!
4. Impurity includes thoughts, actions, and dispositions
 - a. Notice that the sins Jesus lists include thoughts, concrete actions, and evil dispositions.
 - b. Thus, even if one avoids actual theft, a greedy heart is still sinful and makes the person impure! A person who avoids murder but hates in their heart is still sinful!
 5. Impurity arises from a sinful heart and nature
 - a. From within, out of our hearts comes sin
 - b. Sin is not forced upon me from outside forces, but grows out of my own heart.
 - c. This is why Jesus says these impurities arise from within, out of the heart.
 - d. The Pharisees thought they were internally pure and had to protect themselves from external impurity, but we are actually internally impure and corrupt and need redemption from outside of ourselves!
 - e. Sin is much deeper than the Pharisees ever imagined!

D. Summarizing impurity according to Jesus (slide)

IV. Truly Clean - Applying the Word

- A. Because impurity is not ritual but moral, cleansing can never come from religious rituals

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming — not the realities themselves. For this reason **it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.** ² If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴ because **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** Hebrews 10:1-4

1. The law required ritual sacrifice to cover sin
2. But ritual sacrifices could not truly cleanse our sin!
3. Because sin sprang from the depths of our souls, we needed cleansing that could reach down to the core of our being!

- B. Because sin is internal and deep, I need deep internal cleansing, which is provided by the sacrifice of Jesus.

We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:10-12

1. Through the sacrifice of Jesus we are holy!
2. The ritual sacrifices could never take away sin - but Jesus' one great sacrifice removes our sin forever!
3. Jesus sat down - because His atoning work is done!
4. This is true justification and cleansing from sin!

- C. Because sin is internal and deep, I need the internal change given in the new covenant.

“The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. ³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Jeremiah 31:31-33

1. The moral law showed sin and righteousness but could not give power in the struggle against sin.
2. God promised a new covenant where the law would be written within - in our hearts and minds.
3. Now God's moral Law is as deep as our sin nature! I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezekiel 36:26-27
4. God gives us a new heart, with His Law written on it, which now wants to turn from sin and follow Him.
5. God's Spirit now dwells in us to empower us in our struggle against sin!
6. While ceremonial washings and sacrifices could never cleanse our sin, the sacrifice of Christ has made us pure.
7. While God's Law could point out our sin, it could never empower us to resist sin, but God's Spirit now dwells in us to root out sin and conform us to Christ!

8. This is the glory of the New Covenant - which the Pharisees missed and despised!

D. Our New Covenant Table

1. This Table reminds us of Christ's cleansing work
2. But it is no mere external ritual - the Spirit unites us to Christ, gives us graces, and empowers us for our continued growth in holiness!
3. Come and be strengthened!

Truly Clean

Mark 7:14-23
August 20, 2023
Communion

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: Holiness; atonement; God's Law; legalism; righteousness; salvation and deliverance; sin

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thess. 5:23-24

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.'" 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.'" Mark 7:14-23