

Diet Can't Fix This Problem

Mark 7:14-23

October 6, 2024, Jory Nunn

Well, good morning, everyone again.

Before we get started, I want to take us back two sermons ago. I have a correction to make, and I would ask that those of us that are working diligently on the digital stuff would make sure this gets put online as well because it was a mistake worth correcting. In Matthew chapter 7:13 and 14, I had said that the narrow gate, the term for that in the New Testament Greek, is *micros*, something that's small, that was actually the incorrect term. This is one of the most wonderful things about the pastors that you have serving you in this church. They're checking my Greek. This is a good thing. The term actually is *stenos*. It's where we get the term stenographer, so shorthand court reporter, that type of person. So it's strict, exacting, narrow. That's what that term is. And so the term that Jesus used regarding the narrow gate is that term strict, exacting, confining, narrow.

Now, please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark. We're in chapter seven. Our verses today are going to be 14 through 23 but for an introduction, I want to bring us back a little bit into last week's message to kind of bring us up to speed on what's going on here. Jesus had just gotten through with having engagement with the religious leaders and Pharisees that Jerusalem had sent to question Him to try to trap Him in something. We anticipated as we were brought into that, that they were going to try to trap Him that He was doing something against God's law. But instead, the accusation that came was, "Your disciples are breaking the traditions of the elders." So it wasn't a law that they accused His disciples of breaking. It was a tradition, and that tradition was that they didn't wash their hands properly before eating. Just a trivial, really idiotic thing that they were trying to bring as an accusation against Him. And Jesus in defense, not in defense of His disciples, but in defense of the truth of God's word, exposed what they were actually doing, and that is, they were suppressing the truth of God. They were not following the truth of God, and instead, they brought their traditions up above the truth of God's Word. And so there was a contrast going on there that Mark was giving us between the religious leaders and Jesus. In chapter six, at the end of chapter six. This is Jesus who heals you. This is Jesus who teaches truth, as compared to the religious leaders and the Pharisees who lay heavy burdens and traditions on you. And so Jesus exposed their hypocrisy, using the law to expose their hypocrisy, that what they were actually doing was invalidating the Scriptures and not even allowing people to obey the Scripture.

And so here in this next section, in 14 through 23 there's still a contrast going on. And what Mark is going to do here is not necessarily a contrast, but more of, that's what it looks like on the surface. That's what it looks like on the outside and all the doing. Here's what's actually happening on the inside. And so in our proposition this morning, what we're going to be looking at, if you flip your bulletin over on the backside, what we're going to see is the Lord Jesus is going to explain to us that anything really and in this case, food cannot make you unfit for worship. It's impossible for food to do that. But rather a

heart full of sin is what defiles. That's what we're going to see in our passage this morning. And our two headings, if you will, our two outline points are, number one, food does not defile. We're going to see that in verses 14 through 19. And number two, the heart defiles; and we'll see that in verse 20 to 23. And as with most of the Gospels, what we want to do is we just want to work through this together one verse at a time. Let's pray.

Father. We are grateful once again, that we get to come to Your word and understand it as You have written it. Your people here, present with the Spirit of God, can know truth because truth resides within us, in the Holy Spirit. Thank You that He is our ultimate teacher here this morning. As we read truth Spirit, please teach us what you have to say to your church this morning. Lord, we want to hear from You. As the song said, as we entered into this world we see Jesus. Lord, we want Him. We want to see Him. In this text, Lord, teach us this morning, all to the glory of Christ and God's people said, Amen.

So number one, food does not defile. Food does not defile. Verse 14a says, "After He called the crowd to Him again." Now we need to see what's going on here. Jesus, He actually was dealing with the religious leaders just a few minutes ago in the passage previous. And now He steps away from the religious leaders. He takes His focus and His attention off of them. He is done engaging with them. What they have just brought to Jesus, the crowd needs to really know what's happening here. They need to understand what it is that just took place. And so He turns His attention to the crowd, and He says to them. "He began saying to them, 'Listen to me, all of you.'" This is a command. Both of those words there, listen to me and understand are in the command form. That is, "What I am about to say to you regarding this exchange that just happened. This is of major significance. You need to pay attention to what I'm going to say to you right now." Don't miss this. "Hear what I am saying and understand the gravity of the situation." Of what the religious leaders had been teaching for all this time, the traditions of men, the gravity of that, we don't want to diminish that, because what they were actually teaching – heartless external law keeping – is what brought you into a right relationship with God. That's what they were teaching. Heartless external law keeping and empty traditions are what brought you into a right relationship and what keeps you there. That's the gravity of this. And so Jesus's command when He when He cries out to the crowds, "Listen to what I'm about to tell you and pay attention so that you understand. This is really important."

Here's the implication of the importance of it. Remember back in Matthew chapter 23 last week, I read you the woes that Jesus declared on the religious leaders. Verse 13 of Matthew chapter three. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Remember hypocrites? What that means? They're actors. They're pretending to be something they're not. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter in." That's a pretty major implication there. Not only Pharisees, religious leaders, hypocrites, not only do you shut off the entrance of heaven by what you're teaching, but you're actually not allowing other people to go in as well by what you're teaching. That's how big a deal this is. It matters what is taught. It most matters when the things of God are taught. And the religious leaders and

Pharisees, they had it wrong. They shut off the kingdom of heaven, not only from themselves, but also the ones that they were teaching. This is a big deal. That's how serious this is.

They shut up the way. What did Jesus come to do? To open the way? Right? He came to reveal the door. He came to reveal the gate. He came to show people this is the gate. He came to show people "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, but through Me." That's what Jesus came to do. The religious leaders, they shut it up. The ones that the people depended upon to actually lead them in, they were actually closing the door and not allowing them to go in. So this is a major deal, and Jesus cries out to the crowd, listen to me and understand what I'm about to say.

Then verse 15, He says, "There is nothing." This is what Jesus is saying to the crowd. Verse 15, Read along with me, "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."

Now we need to pause here for a minute. This is a really interesting thing that we need to kind of get a little grip on here. This is actually a parable. If you look down just a little bit further in 17b, it's actually identified as a parable. This is not a straightforward statement that there's absolutely no way anyone can miss it, which almost seems to kind of contrast with Jesus is trying to do here, to command the crowd, "Listen to what I'm saying and understand." The parables were given, as you may remember earlier, Jesus tells the disciples, "Everything to you, the secrets of the kingdom have been given, but to everybody else, it's given in parables." It's an interesting statement, and the reason why is simply this. There are those who were in the crowd, they were going to understand. But there are also those who were in the crowd, their hearts were hard, and their hearts were dark, and they not only had no interest in understanding, but they wouldn't understand because they were dead in their sin. But there are those that would hear, they would listen, and they would understand. It was those that the Lord was working in and so this is given in parable form. To us, of course, it seems straightforward. Well, nothing that comes into me can defile me, but for a Jew that is absolutely earth shattering to them. For someone to come up and say that anything that I take into my body will not and cannot make me ceremonially unclean. Totally goes contrary to everything that they understood, absolutely backwards for a Jew, that is an earth-shattering statement, and the majority of the people, most likely didn't get it. What does that even mean? I've been told all of my life, everything that I take in is actually what defiles me. So what is He even talking about? They would have had that type of reaction.

Now, a parable, I need to explain what that is, for those that you may or may not know. A parable is a Greek compound word *para*, alongside of *bole* is actually the Greek term. It's where we get our term for ball. What do we do with balls? We throw them, right? That's what this means, is to throw alongside. And so a parable is throwing alongside of something. So it is a rhetorical figure of speech, setting one thing beside another to form a comparison or an illustration to teach, listen, a greater reality. So you're comparing two things. It's like a story alongside of the truth. The story is not the main thing. The truth is the main thing. So it's put up alongside of it, so that it teaches the greater reality. So a lower base

illustration, or teaching about something that everybody would understand, even though they don't quite get it, maybe is teaching a greater reality. That's what a parable is. So a common story with an uncommon spiritual reality. The story is never the main point, right? It's always pointing to a greater reality. That's one of the dangers of when we study parables, we want to be careful not to draw too much doctrine out of the story because the story is told for a greater reality. So for the Jew, this is absolutely earth-shattering for them, they would not in and of themselves and what they've been taught, they wouldn't have had a clue what He was saying. No, that doesn't make any sense because everything I take in matters, everything that I eat matters, with regard to worship. This was 180 degrees from where they were. I can't remember. I think it was Hitler's propaganda, man, you tell a lie for long enough, what does it become? Truth to the people. You tell it for long enough, over and over and over again, eventually people will buy into it; and that's what's going on here. These Jews were taught for so long by their religious leaders these traditions of men and misinterpretation of the law that they didn't get it. They didn't understand it. This parable made no sense to them. As dramatic a parable as it was, its understanding was completely lost on them, on the majority. Mark records zero exchange with the crowd in. There's no question-and-answer time. There's no cries of outrage that come from them, just no exchange whatsoever. They're dumbfounded, lost on them.

However, we know that it was not lost on the religious leaders. Not in Gospel of Mark, but this same exchange that takes place in Matthew 15, the exact same event. Matthew records this. And it's really interesting. Matthew 15:12-14, if you're taking notes, then the disciples came and said to Him, that is after He makes this statement, anything that's outside of a man can't defile Him. After Jesus makes that statement, the disciples come to Him in Matthew 15, and they say this,

Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?" But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

So none of it was lost on the religious leaders, which is really interesting, they actually understood that this statement that Jesus was saying was directed at them, that what they were teaching for literally hundreds of years was wrong. They got it, and they were offended by it as they should have been, as false teachers who probably actually believed exactly what they were teaching was true. They should have been offended by it. Nonetheless. It needed to be pointed out. It's not until He leaves the crowd that the parable is actually explained.

Look down there. Well actually, I need to make mention of some of your Bibles. Some of your bibles may have verse 16 in it. Verse 16, it should be in brackets. You see that in your Bibles there, the reason that is, is verse 16 it's not in the earliest, most reliable manuscripts of the gospel of Mark, and so it's put there in brackets as it was added in later. And so we don't believe that that's part of the original text.

Now, Jesus has made that statement before in different places. However, in the earliest manuscripts that we have of the gospel of Mark, it is not present.

So on to verse 17, “^{When} he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.” So we’re going to see this explanation in a private setting. Not sure what house this is but the definite article there where it says, when He left the crowd and entered *the* house, it seems to indicate that this was a house that everybody knew about, at least the disciples. It’s possible that it was Peter and Andrew’s house. Mark and in his Gospel, in chapter 1:29 Jesus entered that house and being referred to as *the* house, it’s possible that it is, but it’s really not that consequential. The text doesn’t make any big deal of it here, so not sure what house it is, but it is the house. Regardless of which one, it was obviously private. Thus they questioned Him about what this meant.

So just like the crowds, the disciples, it was lost on them. They didn’t get it. They didn’t understand what Jesus was saying. Their lives had been so consumed with the same teaching of the crowds that their relationship with God was based on ceremony, things that you eat, this process of everything outside of your body was what defiled you. If you touched it, tasted it, felt it, done it wrong, whatever, if it was outside, it had the potential to defile you. And the disciples, they didn’t understand what Jesus said either. That nothing can defile you outside your body. Following all the laws of God and the laws of men are what made them right. That’s what they believed.

Let’s just look into the glimpse of one of the disciple’s minds. Peter gives us just a short glimpse into what He thinks. Actually, I should say Luke gives us a short glimpse as he wrote the book of Acts. Acts 11, Peter is up in this room, He’s in this house, and he’s, he’s in this meditative trance. That’s not some Middle Eastern mysticism thing; he was focused on the Word of God, and he was praying. And the Lord came to him in a vision, and he sees this sheet come down and it’s full of all kinds of animals. They’re all unclean animals to a Jew. So creeping things on the ground, certain birds, this sheet coming down out of heaven, it was full of all these animals. And so Peter’s looking at this thing in a vision. And the Lord says to Peter during that vision, He says, “Rise, kill and eat.” So the Lord tells Peter in this vision, “rise up, kill some of these animals and eat.” Listen to Peter’s reaction in verse eight of chapter 11. “But I said that is Peter, ‘By no means Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’” That is through and through Jewish. “Nothing unholy or unclean has ever touched my mouth. I would not profane myself in such a way as to be unclean or unfit for worship.”

So for a Jew, what you put into your body is what made you ceremonially unclean or clean. You had to watch what you ate all the time. You had to be careful that nothing that you ate was touched by anything that you couldn’t eat or even came close to it in some instances. You had to be careful where you were at when you ate it. You had to be careful how you washed your hands when you ate it, all this external stuff before coming into the presence of God, before being able to be clean enough to come into His presence.

Listen to Jesus's response to them. Verse 18, "and He was saying to them." By the way, one more thing with your Bibles, if you see a little asterisk above, you see where it has there above the word 'said,' that means it's in the present tense. The Gospel of Mark is always just moving fast, moving fluently. His favorite word is immediately. He always says immediately. And so many of the things that he brings with a verb is going to be in the present tense. So Jesus was saying to them, what he's trying to do is put us right there where this exchange is happening. So verse 18, "And He was saying to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him." So He repeats the same thing, but this time He says it to them with a rhetorical question, "Do you not yet still understand? Or do you not yet understand?" And it's a rhetorical question in the form of a rebuke. You people should know this. That's what He's saying. You should know this, insinuating, of course, that their understanding of the law was skewed.

If you read the law correctly, you would know this, the reality that defilement does not come from the outside of a person, they should have gotten that. They should have gotten that just through the reading of the law. But once again, the religious leaders, the scribes, the Pharisees, this had been so ingrained into the people of God, into the Jewish culture, that the truth of the Scripture is just lost. It was just all rote systems, empty, heartless worship, and so they didn't get it.

So He's talking here, once again, specifically about food, and He tells them why it can't defile them. Verse 19, He says, "because it does not go into his heart." So He gives them a reason, right? "It does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" That word eliminated there is where we get our word latrine. It goes into the sewer. The things that go into a man, it's just eliminated as excrement. It has no value because it doesn't touch the heart. This is exactly what the religious leaders were teaching. The food that your disciples are eating is making them ceremonially unclean. That's why this is so important. That's why this is so important.

Now we need to also make note here that there are Levitical laws that taught that people, for them to be ceremonially clean, they could only eat certain food. But it was never the main thing. It was always foreshadowing something, pointing to a future, a greater reality. The foods that they were prescribed to eat was to keep them not only ceremonially clean for an illustration, that it was constant that they were unclean, but it was also to keep them separate from the nations that was there as well; but it was never the main thing. Never intended to purify the heart, and that's what Jesus is saying here.

Write this passage down. It's for your own study, but it'll give you a little more insight about the food laws and the ceremonial laws and where all that was pointing to. Hebrews 9:9-14. Hebrews 9:9-14. Again, I'm not going to read that; that's for your own study.

So this is not something coming in that defiles, but rather, it is something already what, present. It's already present. That's what defiles a man. That's what He's getting to here. Food goes into the mouth. It enters the stomach, then enters the sewer. It never touches the human heart.

Now we need to talk a little bit about the human heart here because that's also an organ, and technically, if you doctors that are present in the room, you're like, well, yeah, it does. It nourishes the heart. Well, okay, so we have to deal with that. The term here for heart is where we get the term for anything cardiologist, echocardiogram, the term is *cardia*. It is the human heart. If I have cardiac arrest, my heart is in arrest, right? So that's the term that is used here. But it is an illustrative term. It is sometimes identified as the seat of emotions. It is the core of who somebody really is. When it's used as an illustration or a word picture in Scripture, that's what it is, the centre of who a person actually is. This heart you cannot see. It is the hidden component of the person inside. The place, and this is really important, this place, the human heart. It's the one that only God fully knows. It's the one that God fully knows. You, me, in my own heart, I don't have a clue what's inside there. The condition of the human heart is such that only the eyes of a holy God can actually see it to its fullness, and we need to have that foundation as we enter into this next section.

Proverbs 20:27, it's just a reference for you, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord." So imagine the human spirit, it's a lamp. It's lit up bright, "searching all the innermost parts of his being." So the Lord, through the human spirit, is looking into your inmost being. As it were, He's pulling back the curtain of the flesh, of the of the things that you put on on the outside, and He looks internal. It's starting to get a little scary.

Psalms 44:21 says, this, "Would not God find this out?" As in, He can see everything. What in the world are we going to do in the secret parts? Anything? "Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart." You have no secrets. You can write them down in a book all you want. But the only one who's going to be able to not see it, is other people. God sees all the secrets of the human heart.

Jeremiah, 17:10, we read that this morning, "I the LORD search the heart."

So not only God, but the Scriptures also. Not only God knows the fullness of the heart, but the Scriptures also know the heart. Hebrews 4:12, "The word of God is living and active, and it's sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow." And get this, "it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." That's getting really personal. So when you read the Scriptures, it's actually discerning your heart. Whoever you are on the inside actually, when you read the Scripture, it's revealing it. That's a pretty powerful book. That's a pretty powerful book.

So once again, just like we were last week, we're dealing with a heart problem here, right? We're not dealing with a doing problem. We're dealing with a heart problem. There is a condition in the human heart here that Jesus is about to open up that is transformative for His disciples, and it certainly should be for us today. So food cannot affect the would-be worshiper in any way, shape or form, other than maybe it gives him some energy, makes him sick, whatever. But with regard to worship doesn't affect

him at all, none whatsoever. It doesn't make him unfit or fit. In that sense, it's benign. It has no effect on him because those things that you put into your mouth do not go into the core of who you are. That's what we're dealing with here.

This was the meaning of course, write this one down, this will give you a little more explanation as well into what Jesus was talking about. John 6:48 He said, "I am the bread of life." A little bit later on there he says, "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no part in the kingdom of heaven." What was He talking about? His actual flesh and blood? Absolutely not. And the Jews, what did they do? The mass majority of them left Him because "we're not going to eat anything unclean. You can't eat a human. How dumb is that?" But He wasn't talking about eating His flesh or drinking His blood. There was a greater spiritual reality, right? You must take Him into the core of who you are. That's what He was talking about.

This thing with food is, I mean, we live in a really strange culture right now, I'm going to pick on some of you, including myself. We really elevate food to this strange place. There's vegans out there, there's carnivores out there, and it's almost like, and I've gotten caught up in this myself, it's almost like there's this moment of worship that takes place as you're describing the way that you eat. Maybe really be careful that we don't allow food to be a stumbling block for any of our brothers or sisters. Remember, what did He say at the end of verse 19? Look down at your Bibles that food is eliminated, and Mark puts in parentheses here, because food has no effect whatsoever on worship. This is how you need to view all foods, whether you're Jew or Gentile. He says this, "Thus He declared all foods what? Clean." That's meat, that's vegetable, whatever you want to eat. It's clean. It will not affect your worship one way or another. So be careful. Don't let your food become a stumbling block. Each one of you, by the way, you carnivores and vegans, you got a leg to stand on in all things you do, we didn't have meat to eat in the garden, right? No, it's just vegetables fruit, seed bearing plants. Well, what happened after the flood? We were given animals, so we got both of them now. So quit arguing. Let's move on.

Point number two. Point number two, this is a heart issue, right? The heart defiles, that's what He's going to get into here. It is not a food issue. It is a heart issue. Verse 20, let's read together. "And He was saying, 'That which proceeds out of the man that is what defiles them.'" This completely takes everything, as we said before, everything that a Jew believes, flips it totally on its head. The thing that defiles you, my Jewish brother, is what comes out of you. What? What does that even mean? No, what I take into me defiles, No, no, what comes out of you is what defiles you. Defilement does not, cannot come from external exposure, but rather from an internal reality.

Think about that even in our own Christianese society. This is coming from inside of us. I mean, most people are good, aren't they? How can you say that we have a heart issue? I mean, most people are good. They do good things all the time. I thought most people were good on the inside. They have a good heart. That's what all the songs on the radio say. So it must be true. Proverbs says, "Most men will proclaim each His own goodness." Right? So it's not a reality that he is good on the inside, but most men

will proclaim it. In a gospel encounter, you will find this almost 100% of the time. “Do you believe you're a good person?” And what is their answer? “Yeah.” Most men will proclaim each His own goodness. And then after that, it says, “But who can find a faithful one?” The answer is nobody. There is none who is faithful in that regard. So defilement does not come from the outside.

We're going to do a little mental exercise here this morning. If you're not uncomfortable, it's time to get uncomfortable. We cannot miss understanding the depravity of the human heart. If you miss this, you will not get the gospel. You will not understand a cure for a disease if you don't understand the disease. You need to know what the disease is. So we're going to do a little heart exercise, if you will. So I want all of you, you don't need to close your eyes, but I want all of you to think back on the last day. We'll keep it close. I want you to compile yesterday's thoughts into a five-minute video, just all your thoughts from the day. You can throw in actions if you want, but I really want to assume a mental exercise, exercise about the internal component of the human heart. I want you to compile all those thoughts, whether they're good, whether they're bad, into a five-minute video. And I want by a show of hands who is willing to take that five-minute video and play it up here on the screen. If you, being a born-again Christian have *that* type of video to show up here, how depraved and sick do you think the human heart that is unregenerate is? If you're honest. I couldn't get five seconds into it with you people on that five-minute video without feeling shame and disgust. The human heart is desperately sick, full of wickedness, full of depravity. Do not diminish that. You are, as an unregenerate person, helpless and hopeless with this heart because on that final day when you face the Lord Jesus Christ, your flesh will be ripped from you. Everything that you did that was good, everything that you hoped in to be good and get you through that gate will be wiped away; and all that will be left over is the video of your life, of who you actually are. Are you getting in? There is no way. As being born again, all of those deeds, they've already been wiped away, haven't they? Praise God. They're already gone, but you're still stuck in that flesh, aren't you? Again, as we said last time, make no mistake, you are stuck in Romans seven somewhere. If you are a follower of Christ, you want to do *that*, but you end up doing *that*. We still have remnants of our flesh, though our sin before God has been removed from us so far as the east is from the west. Can you ever come by the way from the east to the west to an end? You can north to south. Kind of interesting that He chose to use that one, east to west, all the way around. There's no end so far as east is from the west, so far as He removed our transgressions from us, and He will remember our wicked deeds and sin no more. So if you're in Christ, when that curtain is pulled back, all your deeds that are done in darkness, even after Him, yes, they will be burnt up. Yes, it will come to an end. Yes, there will be loss. But what's left over? Christ's righteousness, and you will enter in.

One more look at what God has to say regarding the human heart, what God has to say regarding the core of humanity. We go all the way back to Genesis for this. Genesis 6:5, write this down. This will guide you in your evangelistic outreach. Genesis 6:5, says this, “Then the Lord saw,” this is before the flood. “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of the heart was only evil” most of the time, no, “continually.” That means on your best day that the thoughts and intents of your heart are only evil continually, on your best day, not on your worst

day. The human heart is such that it is bent toward evil continually. "Yeah, but I do these good things." Well, you did them in selfish motivation, bent toward evil, bent toward self-preservation, which is evil. So there may be some of you that are thinking, "Well, that was before the flood. God wiped all that out, right? Like it's not present anymore." Genesis 8:21 after the flood, after they came out of the ark, just Noah's family there. This is what He says, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man." Why won't He curse the ground on account of men? Because there's something present now that if He did it, all mankind would be wiped out, right? There's something still present. "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from His youth." Nothing changed. He wiped it down to eight people, and it still didn't get rid of the problem. And if you look at the account of Noah after he came out of the ark, He couldn't wait to plant a vineyard so He could get drunk, at least that's my interpretation of what took place. And His son, Canaan, well, that would be generations after, His son was cursed because of a wicked deed. It was present after the flood, and it's present in you, and it's present in me, and it's present in every human being on the planet. So it's a heart issue.

So what are some of the things that are resident within the human heart here? The Lord Jesus is giving us a number of things actually to the disciples here, so that they can see what is actually proceeding out of a man, that these things are already present within them that are defiling them. Verse 21 says, "For from within, out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness." Now I want to go through each one of these just so we can get a, this should be getting heavier and heavier, that we see more and more what is actually at the core of who we are, the centre of who we are as people.

First of all, evil thoughts. What that means is doubting or disputing or arguing. It's a general term for the way that we deal with other people. We doubt, we dispute, we argue, that comes from the heart, that comes from the heart. That doesn't come from external circumstances. You did this to me, and therefore I react. No, out of my heart pours forth doubting, disputing, arguing.

Second, we see fornications, this is a term where we get pornography. The term is *porneia*, anything sexual outside of the confines of a legal marriage, or a lawful marriage in the eyes of God. Anything sexual, anything, outside of the confines of a legal marriage, that's what fornications are.

Next, we see thefts. This is this kleptomaniac, *klepte*. That's where we get that term from somebody who takes something that doesn't belong to them, no matter how small it is, or no matter how large it is. If it doesn't belong to you, and you take it, you are a thief. You're identified as a thief.

He identifies murderers, unjust killing of another person. That's what murder is, unjust killing of another person. So when murder actually takes place, whether it's with a gun, whether it's with a knife, whether it's with your little pinky, its source is from the heart. It begins in the heart. Anger, when it's developed

and not restrained by something, will turn into murderous thoughts, that may turn into murderous actions, but it begins in the heart.

The next one we see there is adultery. This is sexual activity with someone other than your lawful spouse. So you're actually married; that's the difference between fornication and adultery. In adultery, it is you are married, and you have sexual activity with someone other than your spouse. That's adultery and that begins within the heart. Can begin with a look, can begin with a thought, but it always begins right here, right here. It's not your spouse's fault. It's no one else's fault on the outside. This is not something that can come in. This is something that begins right here.

Covetousness is the next term He gives us there. This is wanting more than your fair share, like you have earned this and it's yours, and you look over and see that and you're like, "Well, I want that as well." That's what covetousness is. You desire more than what's your own.

Wickedness. This is just a broad general term for any evil deed. That's what wickedness is.

Deceit. This is baiting a fish. Yep, that's what I said. This is the term that's used for bait. What do you what are you trying to do with bait on a hook? I've fished with a bare hook many times, and unless you snag them, it just doesn't work. You put bait on it to conceal something, right? That's what this is. It's deceit. When you're fishing, you're trying to deceive the fish into biting that hook so you can get them. That's what this type of deceit is. When we, out of our heart, want to deceive somebody, we'll bait them with something. We'll try to draw them in. Fraud and treachery are other descriptive terms for deceit.

Another word there, sensuality; this is living with, this is our culture today, this word. Living without any moral restraint, licentiousness, lustful, indulgent, especially as indecent and outrageous sexual behavior, debauchery, indecency, flagrant immorality. Is that not where we live? Anything goes now. And if you tell me it can't go, you're a bigot. Don't tell me how I can live. We are in a sensual culture right now. They have sexualized everything, everything, so much so that it's actually your identity, and it's so bad, you can even choose your own sexual identity. That's what this word sensuality means.

Envy is the next word. This is literally, it's where we get the word for ophthalmology. So it's an evil eye. And so the evil eye is, you're envying somebody, you're greedy for what other people have. You want it. Your eye is drawn to what they have, and you want it. That's what this term is here.

Slander, it's generally harmful, abusive speech against someone's reputation. This is somebody who is evil speaking about another. Gossip, you don't have anything good to say about your brother or sister, your friend, political figure, whoever. It's just evil words against somebody. That source is not from the outside. It comes from right here. Regardless of how evil that person may be, your speech toward them begins in you. It starts right inside here.

The next word there is pride. Pride is arrogance and haughtiness. You put yourself above others, you look at others and you say, "Oh yeah, I'm definitely better than they are. I'm up here." That's what pride is, arrogance, haughtiness.

And then our last term foolishness. It's not using the ability that you actually have to understand. That's what foolishness is. You're not using the ability that you actually have to understand something. Instead you have some, what we call, foolish understanding; you lack sense. And boastfulness goes along with this as well.

And lastly, in verse 23 He said, "All these evil things proceed from within and defile a man." So Jesus makes it very clear for His disciples here, He makes it very clear for us, all of the evil that exists is not coming into you from the outside. It's coming out of you to the outside. That's what defiles us, that's what keeps us from worship. That's what keeps us from right relationship with God. And if you're a believer, that's what puts you in a discipline situation as a child, is these things that come outside of us.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that anything outside of you or any other person can make you or them unfit for worship. Don't make that mistake. We don't do rituals for the sake of worship. No. Worship is something that must be sought from the inside. As we conform who we truly are into the Word of God led by the Spirit of God, that's the only way for it to work. Nothing on the outside can affect it. As far as making us fit or unfit, all that is necessary to defile a person and make them unfit is already present. You don't have to look for this, people. It's already there. All you have to do is let your guard down. All you have to do is say, "You know what? I don't want to read those. I don't want to read Scriptures today because Hebrews 4:12 it tells me that it's discerning my heart. No, I actually want to go out and do the wicked deeds. I want to do them as in, they are inside of me, and they want to come out." There is a battle that is going on inside each of us who are genuinely a believer. And if there's not a battle, question whether you're a believer. If you just freely do those things. If you just freely live that way, and then you come here and you cover yourself with a nice outfit, and everybody says, "Oh, that's a great looking Christian right there." The darkness is still inside of you, the wickedness is still inside of you, and it usually comes out at night in the dark because the light exposes darkness.

We need to remember this as faithful witnesses of the gospel of Christ, when we are presenting the gospel, we must first get them to acknowledge their own wickedness inside. That's really the beginning of a gospel presentation. They need law. They need law to expose what is in them. And when they see, "Yeah, you're right. My heart is dark, my heart is wicked, my heart is deceitful, my heart is leading me astray. Do you got any cure for that?" "Well, yeah, let me tell you about Jesus. Let me tell you about what He did on the cross." That's where we need to go with that, and that's what we need to do for ourselves daily. We need to be reminded daily Christ died for that thing that I'm about to go do and I'm going to drag Him through the mud while I'm going and doing it. That's what's at stake. You're slandering your Saviour's name as you go to do those evil deeds that are inside.

So what do we do practically as believers? What can I do practically to keep that from coming out? You need to be saturated in the Word of God because it is the thing that is the discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It will help you to bring those things under subjection. The Apostle Paul used in descriptive way, this way, He says, "I beat my body into subjection." He's literally beating His body into subjection. He is telling it what it's going to do. "No, you are not going to tell me what I'm going to do. I am going to tell you what you are going to do for me." That's what that means. He talks about boxing and fighting against His flesh. So there's a battle that needs to take place. In the beginning of that you got to recognize you do not know how dark your heart is, and you will never know how dark it is. You just need to know that the Scripture has made it clear it's dark, and these are the things that are there present. There's a battle that rages on inside of you to get it to come out, to just taste that fruit, because God's keeping something from you, and that pleasure you're thinking about. You have to fight that. You truly have to suppress it with the Word of God, asking God, through the Spirit of God, to help you to not give in to that. Remember, we talked about progressive sanctification a couple of weeks ago. It looks like this. This is when your heart is doing what it wants to, this is when you follow that secular song that says, "Follow your heart; you're in one of those low spots." No, come up out of that recognize, no. You don't need to follow your heart. You need to follow the Scripture. Repent, get back on the right track, and your life will look like that. But in the end, you will be with the Lord.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we are grateful that we, Your people, can actually understand what this means, Lord, that though we are redeemed, our hearts, being born in sin, being totally depraved through Adam, there's remnants of darkness and wickedness still in there, wanting to come out, wanting to rule our lives, but we as Your people, need to let Christ rule in our hearts. Every evil thought, every evil deed, every wicked, wrong doctrine is to be taken captive to the captivity of Christ. We're to take it and we're to compare it to your Word and say, "Oh, that's wrong. I'm wrong. Lord, forgive me."

Lord, help us to walk in such a way that when the world sees us outside and we try to live as faithful believers, that they will also see that on the inside, in the secret places, Lord help us to live out who we are in You appropriately. All to the glory of Christ and God's people said, Amen.