

The Problem Within
Mark 7:14-23

As we turn in our Bibles to Mark 7 and begin to look back where we left off from last time, I just wanted to draw your attention to the obvious fact that the world is not the way that it ought to be. It doesn't take a genius to know this. It doesn't take someone that's had a lot of experience in life. You don't have to have a ton of intellect or studies or anything like that just to look around and recognize the world is messed-up. There are problems, issues, that abound. As believers, we'd probably call it sin runs rampant. Sin is abundant in our culture and our society, and we see it over and over again. And many people... many social commentaries exist. You know, we get this from different news media outlets. There's even many different churches or Christian organizations that rise up and give their own commentary on what is taking place in the world around us, and it's interesting to see how they go about it.

First of all, the way that they tackle what is wrong, or why are things wrong? ...and then therefore, what we should do about it, and so some people come up with their conclusions, and they preach their conclusions like they are correct and the one problem that needs to be solved. Some people continue to discuss education issues, how the education system is broken, and if we were to fix that and actually get that on track, then you'd have educated people in society, and you wouldn't have messed up society. Other people think legislation, we just need to legislate the right things, and when we get the right legislations in place then the rest will follow. Clearly, that will fix this mess that we're in. Other people say it's just a different generation now. Back in my generation, people actually worked hard. Now, they're lazy. Right? These young people don't know what they're doing. If they would just take on a different mindset, rise up, be diligent, we would have a different nation, a different world in front of us. And so, all the different propositions go of what's wrong and how to fix it, and the commentary just continues as people just spew out the same things and recycle the same ideas of how to fix what is really broken in this world.

As believers, we have the word of God. We have the Biblical commentary. We have the accurate, the correct, the inerrant, the infallible, the perfect commentary on what's happening around us. Right? Because from God's Word we have not just the ability to learn more about God, but we actually

have the lens through which to assess and understand the culture we live in. We can have a perfect lens and a perfect view into what is taking place, why it's taking place, and what needs to happen as a result of it. So, for us as believers, it doesn't take long for us to look at Scripture and recognize that the problem is, as we've said in our title, within. It's not the environment. It's not without. It's not all the different ways to go about putting Band-Aids on things, but the problem is coming from something deeper and that's within the heart of mankind.

This is exactly what Jesus is going to address today, and it's amazing that He spoke it two thousand years ago to a culture of Israelites and Jewish people, and yet it is timeless in its truth, and it's actually spot on in its assessment of us in our time now. So, let's look at Mark chapter 7, and we'll look at verses 14-23 this morning. Mark 7:14-23: "And he called the people to him again and said to them, 'Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.' And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, 'Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?' (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.' "

You want Jesus' commentary on the culture, not just good for two thousand years ago, but spot on for right now; Jesus' commentary for why you have a messed-up culture around us, why the world is the way it is, is because of the heart. He gives that laundry list of things that show what is wrong with society and makes it very clear at the end of our passage in verse 23; "All these evil things come from within..." That's the issue. That's the problem, and this is what Jesus intends to really teach us today, too, that we can drill this into our minds and into our own hearts that we might believe this more deeply and actually represent it accurately to the world, this idea of the problem within. And it all sets around this idea of defilement. If you remember our last time, we looked at this, verses 1-13, we had the showdown, once again, between Jesus and the religious leaders. He hadn't

really dealt with them for a while. It's been a few chapters. And then last time, we saw them go at it again; the Pharisees the experts in the Law, the scribes, coming at Jesus and questioning Him, of all things, about hand washing.

You remember the whole issue was not just hand washing, but that which the tradition of the elders said about hand washing, that which was handed down, the oral tradition from their forefathers, that which had taken the same authority as the Word of God, the Law of Moses. And Jesus took issue with this. And that's why Jesus had to rise up and confront these religious leaders because they had the wrong authority. Their authority was not coming from God's Word and the Law of Moses. Instead, it was this oral tradition, and they started to make that the issue in regards to hand washing and defilement. Thus, Jesus had to confront that and deal with that and talk about how you have completely abandoned the Word of God and made it void because of your commitment to men's teaching. And now, in our text today, we see a shift where Jesus uses this topic of defilement as a springboard into an even deeper issue. While He has the peoples' attention and while He has this opportunity, and He's dealt with the authority, that God's Word is the only authority, we need nothing else of what people say. God's Word is sufficient. It's all we need. And then, He moves on to say, so let me correctly teach that sufficient Word to you because you had a messed-up teaching, and let me correct that.

And that's what we find here in verses 14-15 to start off our text. We see defilement defined - defilement defined in verses 14-15 in our text. Once again, "And he called the people to him again and said to them, 'Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.'" And what we find in our text is as Jesus has used this springboard, this topic of defilement, to now launch into the heart of mankind, we find the main principle that we're looking at this morning is summarized in verse 15. Verse 15 is our main principle, where He says, "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." That is the main principle. The rest of the passage will just continue to elaborate on that very thought, that very truth.

Well, let's go back to verse 14 and recognize here the scene a little bit. We've already seen that Jesus was just interacting with the religious leaders. He was just confronting them. He was just dealing with their whole kind of, I guess, structure of authority that was off and wrong. And then we see in our text, verse 14; "And he called the people to him again and said to them, 'Hear me, all of you, and understand...'" Jesus has been the good shepherd by protecting the sheep, protecting the flock from the religious leaders and saying you have the wrong authority. You don't teach accurately because you don't even have the right authority. You emphasize the wrong thing. It's not even God's Word, and now Jesus rises up. He calls the people. He summons them to Himself, and He actually tells them "Hear me, all of you, and understand..." And really up to this point, we've seen a lot of people just coming to Jesus. He's doing miracles. He's an interesting guy. He kind of a fun person to be around. He's entertaining, and so people follow Him. And they come and they watch and see what He's going to do next. But here Jesus feels this is too important to pass up. Now that He has the people there, He says come and let me explain to you the truth. Let me teach you more accurately, since you've been led astray by these Pharisees and experts in the Law. Listen to Me; come and understand.

He's dealt with the issue of authority. We know that it's only God's Word that's sufficient. That's all we need. And now He's going to teach it accurately. Now, He's actually going to teach the sufficient Word of God appropriately, precisely, unlike the Pharisees and the scribes and what they had caught-up into. This is Jesus signaling that He's going to say something of importance, and they need to hear it. And that's where we find the principle that comes in verse 15; "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." Jesus is basically surprising this Jewish crowd. If you can think about it for a second, think about this Jewish crowd and what they are used to. They are used to the Law of Moses, and they are used to the oral traditions, and they are used to the Pharisees and the scribes and what they said and how they operate. So, what comes with that? Not just the baggage of how to wash your hands, but also the understanding of what to eat and how to prepare it and properly go about it. What is clean what is unclean? Alright? What do we wear? What days do we celebrate what? How do we go about feasts and festivals? How do we do all this? And there's so many details that the people have been basically burdened by from the Pharisees and the scribes, just being an average Israelite and average Jew at this time.

With that in mind, the principle in verse 15 does really come down like a hammer. It comes down strong. And there's no question about it, basically, Jesus is saying that the consumption of any animal is not going to defile you. It doesn't matter what you eat, that won't defile you. There's nothing that you can eat that will defile you.

Well, we go, okay, I don't know what the tradition of, you know, the elders was and the kind of the oral stuff that was taught by the Pharisees, but I do know the Bible. I know the Old Testament. I know what Moses said, and you might've actually read it for yourself, Leviticus and Deuteronomy and some of these places where God told Israel about clean and unclean animals, and He told them what was wrong with clean and unclean animals and why you couldn't eat unclean animals and that they were defiling. And you kind of think is this a moment where Jesus is now completely contradicting the Old Testament? Is He going against Moses? Is He going against God's Word and what has been stated? It sure seems pretty blatant. It sure comes across that strong. In fact, when we look at this, just to make sure we're all aware here, just for instance in Leviticus, here's one spot. There's multiple places where you find this, but in Leviticus 11:44, we find, "For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." And so, if you were to read through the entire chapter of Leviticus 11, you'd find these things. You'd find insects that are okay to eat, and insects that are not okay to eat. You'd find water animals that are okay and water animals that are not okay to eat, birds that are okay to eat and birds that are not okay to eat, land animals and the same thing. He goes through this long list of what is clean and what is unclean and why this is the case. So that they can be holy as God is holy. And this is further emphasized in Deuteronomy 14. Both these verses are kind of the beginning and the end of that list of animals that are clean and unclean.

How does that list begin and how does that list end? With these two things; "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." In light of that, the list goes on of clean and unclean animals, and then it ends (Deuteronomy 14:21); "You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is

within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God.” (“...you are a people holy to the Lord your God.”) There is a purpose behind this law, and that’s what Jesus is actually getting at. He’s getting at the purpose behind the Law, and Jesus is right in line with it. He’s not contradicting it. He’s right in step with what Moses said and what God told Israel.

One commentator put it this way, “These ceremonial regulations in the Law had a function, teaching symbolically the reality and importance of moral purity or holiness.” He goes on to say, “They demanded an external separation which pointed to the need for an inner heart condition of separation unto God.” Thus, you find that all these stipulations and all these details in the Law of Moses were for a purpose. They’re externally showing what is internally happening. As the people of God, as Israel is internally devoted to God, committed to Him, worshipping Him, it’ll show itself in these external ways, in what they’re eating and what they’re wearing and when they celebrate whatever they celebrate and how they interact - all these things. They would be obvious. It would be known. In fact, it would be so clear that they would stay in the land of Israel. They would obey their God. They would worship Him, wholeheartedly, devoted unto Him internally and externally, that it would get the attention of nations, and nations would come to Israel, and they would not just see the external. They wouldn’t just see, oh, you guys have a weird diet. Or, that’s weird, you wear these things. Or, that’s interesting that you celebrate in this way. It wouldn’t just be that, it would go the next step, and they would understand why. Because these people are internally committed, wholeheartedly devoted, in worshipping Yahweh. That was the point. They were holy unto Him just as God is set part, and there’s no one like Him - so, too, His people would be set apart, unlike the other people and what they do and what they eat and beyond.

So, what we have happening here, really, is Jesus shifting the focus. Right? He’s taking this opportunity and taking advantage of what is at play here, this topic of defilement and hand washing before eating, and He shifts the focus and the emphasis for the concern of purity and defilement away from the external because that’s all these people knew. In the time of Jesus, they had just been bombarded with this teaching. Let us stray - in such a terrible fashion that all you could find were externals, and there was nothing internal taking place. These Jews, they were growing up and being instructed in a spiritually bankrupt religion. Judaism was not pleasing to God. It wasn’t

even close. As we just saw earlier in Mark 7, Jesus quoted Isaiah to say what? "...this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me..." It's a bankrupt system, absolutely empty, vain, nothing that is internally being given to God, and that's what these people are experiencing. So Jesus says all you know are externals. All you know are details about how to eat and dress and carry out all these laws that you don't know the heart behind them. You don't even know the intention that goes with it, and thus Jesus shifts completely away from the externals to talk about the internal aspect of why, and worshipping God alone, being holy unto Him.

The New Testament would continue to confirm what Jesus is teaching here. In fact, we find in Hebrews 10:1, "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities..." And it's important to note, Jesus is not ripping up the Law. He's not taking what Moses wrote, He's not taking God's Word of the Old Testament, saying you can forget this. Let me just toss it in the fire. Right? He's not doing that because, as we can see, the author of Hebrew's saying the Law's actually a good thing, but it's just a shadow, just a shadow of the good things to come and the realities to come. Paul would further emphasize this in Colossians 2:16-17. Paul would say, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." This is what Jesus was doing. He was taking a people that was completely lost in terms of what it means to worship their God Yahweh, and He's just bringing them back to the heart of it all, not throwing out the Law, saying you can forget about the Law. Don't even worry about it. Don't even read it. He's saying that when you read it appropriately, correctly, and understand it, unlike what the Pharisees have done, then you actually have true worship, genuine, sincere, heartfelt worship unto God because the system of Judaism was external, and that's it - all about the show.

And once again, we can find ourselves in this spot where we're the reader looking over this time, two thousand years ago, thinking, yeah, they're really messed-up once again. We get it. They're all about the externals. They're just completely off track, and Jesus has to go and bring them back on track, but the reality is we love externals, and we ourselves struggle with this. I'm not just talking about the world in general, that people like to do external

things that show them doing good, but Christianity, even churches, they so attach themselves to the externals of religion. And we do it as well, as individuals, it makes us feel good. It's so wonderful to be able to say, wow, look at the church attendance, and look at the Bible reading and the Bible plan, and look at the Scripture memory I've done, and look at the time in prayer, and look at this, and look at that. And now, we have this list of externals, and somehow that equals loving God. Somehow that equals true worship. Somehow that equals our heart being completely devoted to Him. And that's not necessarily always true. All the externals can be there, but hearts can be far from God, and that's the issue Jesus has to deal with specifically in terms of just eating, the defilement, and what is clean and unclean, that they've completely missed.

Maybe that's you, still concerned with the external display of Christianity and not actually walking with God, a relationship with Him, drawing near - much better to be in the position of Romans 12:1 as Paul said, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." You want true worship? What does a true relationship with God look like? Lord what would You have me to do? You submit and surrender your body unto God - not your life anymore, not your time anymore, not your abilities, not your money, not anything for you - all for God now, and every day, you do that. Every day, you offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice, not your list of things you've done, but your body, your life is His, and He determines what happens. That's worship. That makes God look glorious, and that's what Jesus is after; that's what God's always been after. It's not like He changed it, and He said one thing with Moses, and now He's saying something different with Jesus. It's always been this way. God has always wanted the heart. Jesus has to clarify this because this does shock the people so much, even His own disciples, so that in verses 17-19, He has to defend it. So, defilement defended in verses 17-19. Defilement defended, verses 17-19. We read "And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, 'Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?' (Thus he declared all foods clean.)"

If you're really good at counting, you'll recognize that there is no verse 16. At least, in my Bible there's not. In some of your Bibles you might actually

have a footnote. After verse 15, there might be a footnote, and it points you down to verse 16 in the bottom. Other Bibles might have it in brackets, so your verse 16 is in the text, but it's in brackets to let you know that there's something different about this verse. And the simplest way to put it is that the earliest and the most reliable manuscripts that we get the Bible from, that we get the New Testament from, just don't have verse 16 in it. It's not until later on down the line as people copied and copied and copied that all of a sudden verse 16 surfaced, and so, while it's not a very controversial verse, it doesn't change our theology or anything like that. It probably actually wasn't what Mark originally wrote. So, that's why we have this kind of footnote, this making it aware that, hey, this probably wasn't actually in the original writing of Mark's gospel. Nonetheless, we move on, and that's just to make you aware of that little gap that we might find.

So then, we get to verse 17; "And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable." We have a change, a change of scene. Jesus had previously been confronting the religious leaders, then calling the people to Himself to instruct them and teach them, and He did that very succinctly and in a very short kind of fashion. And now we have a shift. Now, we have Him in a house, and we don't know where the house is. We don't know whose house it is. And then, we see that the people are generally gone, and who do we have now? Mainly, disciples. And then we also have an interesting thing; "...his disciples asked him about the parable." And you might think we didn't read a whole lot. I didn't see a story in there. Was there a parable somewhere? And it's just to remind you that the word parable is flexible in how it's used. While, yes, it can be a story with a point, it also is like a proverb. It can be a pithy statement. So, verse 15, that principle that we saw, that functions as the parable here - and that's the very thing that the disciples have to ask Jesus about. Explain this parable. Explain this proverb. I mean, you just kind of like dropped that on all the people and laid that out there, and none of us have been living that way. None of us have even been thinking that way, and so they have to ask Jesus, help us out.

I mean, think about how confused they are at this point. They're totally thinking a different way. They've been raised to think a different way. They've been raised to practice a different way. And then, Jesus says what He says in verse 15. So, they have to ask Him, and Jesus, disappointed that they are slow to understand, as He says, "Then are you also without

understanding?” A continual reminder that we find in Mark’s gospels, while, yes, the disciples were there with Jesus and witnessing all of this and watching and listening, they still just had a hard time fully grasping what He’s saying. One, because it’s totally counter-cultural to what they’ve been experiencing in Judaism, but also because they’re just ordinary guys. Right? They’re not the brightest and most amazing men, but they’re trying to figure this all out and trying to put it all together, and Jesus says, man, kind of said this more than once. I keep saying this actually. I keep dealing with this; and so, they’re slow to understand, and it will take them the greater part of Jesus’ ministry before they actually do understand.

He goes on in verses 18-19, and what you’ll find is in the rest of 18-19. You really just have an expansion on the principle of verse 15, the first half of the principle in verse 15 where we read, “There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him...” Just that part of verse 15 is expanded here in verses 18-19. He says, “Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” This is an expansion on what He’s talking about, that there is nothing that can defile. And Jesus says, yeah, it’s simple. The reason why there’s nothing that can defile is because - what happens when you eat something? We all know the simple process of what happens to our food. We consume it. We digest it. We get the nutrients we need from it, and then it’s eliminated, and that’s it. There’s nothing in that process where food somehow comes into contact with your heart, and not just the organ the heart, the very person of who you are, as He says in verse 19; “...since it enters not his heart...” ... “...not his heart...” This is the understanding of what is the intellectual and emotional seat of man, the center of man, it’s his heart. With all his heart, he loves something. With all his heart, he does something, and so Jesus says the food you eat, does that impact your heart? No. It doesn’t. The heart of who you are is not impacted by what you eat.

This is not anything amazingly intellectual, and He has to make sure that they understand this simple point. And they understood how important the heart was. Proverbs 4:23, among many Old Testament passages; “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” The heart was who you are. It was important. It was what expressed who you were and defined you, even, and Jesus says the food you eat has no intersection with that, doesn’t affect that, doesn’t impact that, “...since it enters not his heart...” but instead the stomach and is expelled. Thus, in the example of

unclean food, Jesus explains it doesn't defile in and of itself. The food cannot and does not do that. It's a simple, simple thing, and essentially, they had been so raised, so instructed, so even brainwashed, I would say, to be so concerned with food, and so concerned with this particular external of defiling food, that Jesus has to kind of show them you've missed the problem. You've just been completely wrapped up in the superficial that is not the bigger issue of the problem. It's like someone that has a car that won't start, and if that was me, if I had a car that didn't start, I'm not going to say new windshield wipers. That'll do it. I think that'll do it. I put those new windshield wipers on, and we're good to go. And everyone says, yeah, you might need new windshield wipers, but that's not why the car isn't starting. You've got bigger issues buddy. You've got bigger problems with the engine of your car and what's taking place. And in the same way, the Jewish people of this time are like this - so obsessed with the details of what is defiling in the food and how you wash your hands. And Jesus is simply saying this has nothing to do with the heart. You guys are so concerned about this, and you've missed the heart of it all - completely off point.

Same thing happens in our day. People get up in arms. They're enthusiastic. They're ambitious, and they're all about how to change and how to fix the mess of the world we're in. And so, they go to politics, and they go to solving the problem of world hunger, and they go to more diligence and the education system. And all these things are nice. It's like new windshield wipers. We know there's a bigger issue. ...so external. ...so superficial. And while we say, sure, go ahead. Those are fine things to try and fix, but there's still one thing that remains defiled. It's the heart. It's the heart, the heart of mankind. So, we see defilement has nothing to do with this detailed religious procedure but, really, everything to do with the desires, thoughts and intentions of mankind - that is their heart. This was the issue. This is still the issue. This is the precise truth that Jesus taught, and it still is applicable today, amazing, the amazing plan and will of God.

And then, at the end of verse 19, we have this little commentary by Mark; "(Thus he declared all foods clean.)" Woo-hoo! Bacon is back on the menu. Right? These things are no longer so important and the issue. They're not. "(Thus he declared all foods clean.)" There's a lot of implication to what Jesus is saying here, and it's important because the rest of the New Testament will talk about how much of an issue this is. The rest of the New Testament, you'll have this struggle to get Jewish people that believe in

Jesus and Gentiles that believe in Jesus to somehow come together and be one. And they're so different. You talk about two groups of people that hate each other, and they're so opposed to each other, and now they're supposed to somehow come together. And this would be one of the issues, well, what do we eat? I mean, the Jewish people are so wrapped up in this (as we're finding here in our text as an example) that they're going to think I just can't eat that. I just can't have bacon. I just can't go right to that. There's no way. So, in this time, while Mark is writing to this Gentile audience in, no doubt, a church in Rome that is comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, he throws this in there for them to realize and to kind of get caught up to speed. Hey, Jesus even talked about this. It isn't about food. All foods, it's fine. Whatever. There's something more important here.

So, that's why in the book of Acts you see this struggle and even in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, and you see it continue to come up in Galatians and 1 Corinthians and even Romans at the end, and it keeps coming up. That's because the Jewish people were so taught and led to think a certain thing, and Jesus Himself teaches here, missing the heart, missing the heart of the issue. So, Jesus has to defend this very issue of what even is defilement, and then He gives the example of it in verses 20-23, and that's where we find defilement displayed - defilement displayed in verses 20-23. Once again looking back to our text, and just a reminder as you look at verses 20-23, it's an expansion of the second half of verse 15. Once again the second half of verse 15 said, "...but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." Jump down to verse 20; "And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him." (Repeating Himself.) "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." These are the issues. This is a perfect example of case in point, what's happening, and Jesus recognized this. Yes, mankind is messed-up. Mankind has problems. He gives a whole list of them. It's clear.

It's evident, but notice, for the Jewish people this is an absolute shift again, so wrapped up in externals, so used to blaming other things. If things went wrong, there was something wrong with the system. There was something wrong with something outside of them. It wasn't necessarily within. It wasn't their hearts. But once again, Jesus is not introducing or inventing some new teaching that goes against God's Word. He's just compellingly

teaching what has already been stated. Jeremiah 17:9; “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” Strong statements from Jeremiah, powerful; the issue is so clear. It is the heart. In fact, some people can’t even understand the depth and the complexity of the corruption of their own heart. If you were to look at Ezekiel 36 (which I’d encourage you to do on your own time), in Ezekiel 36, in the whole of the message of Ezekiel to the people of God, he says what you need is a new heart. You need a heart transplant, and God will do it. God loves His people, and He will give them a new heart. That’s the problem. That is the essence of what is wrong with not just Israel but the entire world and all of mankind.

He gives this massive list here; “For from within, out of the heart of man...” Just to make it very clear where this is all coming from, where do you get this list of terrible sins and things happening? “...from within...” and then up and “...out of the heart of man...” To kind of state it doubly is what Jesus does, and He says, “...come evil thoughts...” And some people say that this is almost like the header. This is like the main thing, the main thing that comes “...out of the heart...,” and then, from that you get the string of actions attached to it. So, “...out of the heart of man...,” you get these “...evil thoughts...,” intentions, motives, desires, and then that just shows itself in however it wants, from “...theft [to] murder [to] adultery...,” you name it; all coming from the heart, all attached to the thought life, the motives and intentions of mankind. Jesus is showing simply that all sin comes from within mankind, not from without.

This is what the Bible teaches us. It doesn’t just teach us the truth about who God is and who we are to worship, and who God is and all of His attributes, but it also teaches us of the depravity, the sinfulness of mankind. This is what we find from Paul in Romans 3:10-12. He really doesn’t hold back if you think about how strong this is; “...as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” You don’t really get more clear than that. This is the depravity, the sinfulness of mankind, and yet we love to try and find something else to blame. That’s actually what we’re really good at. And so, that’s what much of the commentary is we look around and we see, umm, ahh, it’s that! If we could just fix that, then we’d have a way better world, and we wouldn’t have all this messed-up sin. If we could fix this system, then that would change everything. And, really, what we do is we’re just pointing the blame at

someone else. We've become really good at doing what Adam and Eve did. We're just right in line with the whole head of the human race, Adam and Eve. In the same way, they, in the garden, disobeyed God, and they choose, rather than to own up to it, to blame shift.

That's still going on, and people continue. It's their pride. It's their arrogance. They don't want to own it and say it's true, I am a wicked person. Who wants to do that? No one. Rather, look around at people and say I'm not as bad as them, and so to fix this thing, let me see, since I'm not as bad as them, I can see how to fix it, pretend like the problem is only with others and not with ourselves. I mean, this totally goes against this idea that man is somehow... just, you know, you can't blame man; they're a product of their environment. You know, I don't know what kind of parents they had. I don't know what kind of, you know, dog they had growing up. I don't know who their second-grade teacher was. I don't know all the details of what they've lived in life. And so, really, you can't really blame them for their sin. Absolutely false! It doesn't matter what you're upbringing or environment is. You sin because you're a man. You sin because you have this wicked heart. You sin because you follow in the footsteps of Adam as Romans 5:12 tells us; "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..." This is the condition of mankind, not seeking after God, instead sinning abundantly.

In the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in 2017, we're following right in the path of Adam and Eve. And we think about how this even plays itself out. Even in our desires to not sin anymore, we can never ever, for any particular sin, put the blame anywhere else other than ourselves. James says this perfectly in James 1:13. I love this; "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." Don't you dare try and blame someone else for something else, for sin, for the condition of mankind, for your own condition. The Word of God is so clear. Any time that you have sinned, you can trace it back to what? Your own desire. Well, they made me, or they said so, or this is the way I was raised, or this is just who I am. It's true. This is who you are, a sinful person, and you'll continue to allow your own sinful desires to draw you away to sin against God; and

thus, the problem of mankind. Mankind is sick, corrupt, depraved. So, in our text, we have a clear, precise commentary on the culture of mankind, a timeless commentary, actually, on it; “All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” That’s the issue. The heart, that is the problem with mankind. It is not some other system out there. It’s not the product of environment or anything like that. It’s the heart of mankind.

So, how to respond? As many have already done, and they continue to do even in the church and outside, there’s rebellion. People don’t want to own up to it. People don’t want to state, yeah, it’s true; I have a sinful heart. Yeah, it’s true; I rebel against God. People don’t want to own that, and instead, they rebel against this assessment that Jesus has given, and they call Him unloving for saying such things, and they call us intolerant for preaching such things. And the reality is they will face God. They will stand before God with their sinful, corrupt, defiled heart, and they will be rewarded with the punishment of God’s wrath because they did not submit and surrender to Him and plead and ask for a new heart – rather, repent! That is the right response. For all of the world and for us individually in this room, we need to recognize the sick heart that we have, repenting, humbly bowing down before God surrendering to Him and pleading for Jesus’ cure, the death that He died on the cross for us and the life of resurrection and hope that He now lives.

And for many in this room, I know that there is this hope that we have, that we have surrendered to God, that we have bowed down, that we have asked for a new heart, and His Holy Spirit is inside of us, and we rejoice, and we gather together, and we praise God, and we look to His Word and continue to live this out. But just remember, this is a high calling because we have the audacity to tell the world, oh, we know the problem. Yeah, we know what the problem is with the world, and so we’re smarter than all the analysts on TV. So, we know what the problems are, and we actually know the solution. That’s our claim. That’s what we make because that’s what God’s Word says. We have the understanding, the mind of Christ, to know the problem of society and the solution. What a shame it is if we don’t live that out. How terrible it is if we undermine that entire message with a life that’s not consistent. I hope and pray that our entire congregation would take this claim seriously. We have a hopeful message. We have the truth, and our lives need to represent that. We can’t go the way of Israel and claim to worship the one true God while falling into the same idolatry and the same

sinfulness as the rest of the world. And we take this seriously. May we rise up, encouraging each other, drawing near to God with sincere hearts, not just with lips, and our hearts would be near to Him, and we would address the problems within us, within society, on the heart level, understanding only God's solution to give us a new heart in Christ.