

FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Friday, July 28

Reading: Mark 6:53 - 7:23

Mark 7:20 *He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. 21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—*

As Jesus continues His ministry He is confronted once again by the Pharisees. Their criticism of Jesus' disciples about handwashing had nothing to do with hygiene. They were upset that they were not following the rituals the Pharisees had made up. Jesus would have no part of their nit-picking. He presents two reasons why they were hypocrites.

First, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13 as an indictment against these religious leaders. While they worshiped God with their lips, their hearts were far from Him. They claimed to speak for God but were really only teaching their own ideas.

Second, Jesus exposes one of the ways they twisted God's Word to get their own way. He cites the command to honor father and mother which implies respect and care for one's parents. But the Pharisees got around this by saying that their money was dedicated to God and so could not be used to help their parents. Jesus claimed this action voided God's command in favor of their own traditions.

Jesus now brings His point home by returning to the discussion about clean hands. He reminds the crowd that it is not what goes into a person that defiles them but what comes out. He explains to His disciples that all sin begins in the heart. Interestingly, the twelve sins Jesus lists are equally split between evil actions and evil attitudes.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. "These People Honor Me with Their Lips, But Their Hearts are Far From Me." I wonder how many Christians think like the Pharisees. As long as they look clean and holy on the outside, it doesn't matter what's going on in their heart? Their bad attitudes and evil thoughts don't count! The Pharisees twisted God's Word to get what they wanted. They didn't have to obey what God said as long as they had a good excuse! Jesus makes it clear that we can claim to honor God with our lips and still have our hearts far from Him! Does what we sing and say in church really reflect the condition of our hearts? Are we putting on a "false front" so others think we are "holier" than we really are? Do we twist or ignore God's Word when it doesn't match up with our own ideas and desires?
2. "All These Evils Come from Inside and Defile a Person." The Pharisees were more concerned about following their own rules than worshipping the true God. They thought they were right with God because they looked clean on the outside. Jesus reminds us that sin and defilement spring from our hearts. Let us not be people of excuses but people of obedience. Let's live for Christ from the inside out.