

August 30, 2015
Sermon The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 7:14–23

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 7:14–23 (ESV)

¹⁴ And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: 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.” ¹⁷ And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Clean hands are important.

And how we figure out what really is clean by sight, smell, or even taste? My wife told me last week that I gave the young folks lots of hints and tricks about getting out of taking their baths. It seems like children work really hard to get out of taking a bath, even harder than it would be to just take the bath.

How about the hints or tricks that we use to get out of doing what is right? How about the justifications and rationalizations that we make to make ourselves appear to be clean.

As I mentioned in last weeks sermon, Jesus shows this to the crowds in the Gospel accounts for this morning. Jesus draws our attention away from human traditions, which cannot save us, to focus on God's Word, which can. God's words, spoken to us and for us, expose the hidden dirt, the dirt we've been hiding in the hope no one would see.

And look at His list that He gives us:

“evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.”

Ouch, we are all caught by at least one of those.

If we consider that Jesus is talking about thoughts, words and deeds, I highly doubt that any of us can escape from being caught by all of these.

In our modern day society we take great strides to make our outside look good, but that which is in our hearts is that which kills us—slowly poisoning us from the inside out.

We act like Pharisees in focusing on external sins of others rather than the sins from within ourselves.

We say we promote marriage yet look the other way when we see a married man flirting with a woman that is not his wife.

We aren't quite as quick to change the channel on the TV when there is something on that we know isn't right. No one sees it so it's ok.

We see someone flaunting their new big boy toys or their new phone, or jewelry and the jealousy bites us and we breath evil thoughts and wishes towards them.

We see the story in the paper about a school shooting and condemn the shooter; yet we don't see how being angry or hating someone else is murder too.

What is "under our skin" or inside of us is slowly killing us too. Have you ever known of someone who looks healthy but has a disease raging inside his or her body? Looks can be deceiving.

Cancer sneaks up on so many people that all of us here have known someone that has suffered with it. They may look as healthy and strong as a horse, until their strength and body waste away.

In the same way, people can smile nicely and be pleasant but still have sin down deep at their core, eating away at their lives and souls.

We are also those people who may look okay on the outside but are not fine on the inside.

Look at world famous actor and comedian, Robin Williams. He appeared to love life and always made people laugh. Yet he struggled with clinical depression all his life until he lost all hope and committed suicide.

Bill Cosby is another. The father figure to many, things looked great on the outside, yet sin ruled in his private life until he was forced to face the consequences for his actions.

And we are not exempt in the least. Jesus pointed out the evil that lurks in our hearts that we may be able to hide from others (vv 14–15, 21–23).

Yet these hidden, inside sins will slowly kill us if we do not put them before the Lord in true repentance.

We can't do it on our own. It takes something, Someone, completely outside us to wash us clean on the inside.

God looked into his heart, not ours, to devise a plan for our salvation. It wasn't anything inside us that paid for our sins—no good, pure thoughts of the heart, no outward action that would please the strictest Pharisee.

It was the God the Father, who looked to His Son, completely outside us, who came to earth and paid the price: His life on the cross.

We have to look away from ourselves; and look to Jesus on the cross: His pure, undefiled, sinless heart broken, pierced for our sinful selves.

And then the Holy Spirit—from outside—comes into our sinful hearts and brings the cleansing of Jesus' death.

He comes to us in the water of Baptism, which washes away our sins in a miraculous way.

He speaks to us, in God's Word—of preaching and forgiveness—and He declares us pure, holy, forgiven because of what He has done for us!

And furthermore, He comes to us in His holy meal. We take into ourselves Jesus' very body and blood in the Lord's Supper and we are forgiven once again.

It brings forgiveness so real to us that we can taste it. Through these Means of Grace—God's Word and Sacraments—God creates faith in our hearts.

See, even our faith is totally from outside us too. And a heart of faith is a clean heart, purified of that sin within, and it receives eternal life.

In Christ, we are made clean of sin. So when the devil tries to call you to account for your sins, point him to Jesus.

He has washed you clean in His precious blood and in Christ alone, the Father has declared you clean. You are forgiven, you are clean indeed.

Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus! Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria