

Dealing with the Root of Our Sin

Mark 7:18-23

Introduction:

- This scripture exposes the hypocrisy that the Pharisees had in Jesus day- two things are contrasted here: unclean hands vs. an unclean heart
- They were focused on the external rituals of their day, but had neglected their inner man
- This helps to reveal our similar struggles as Christians. So often we focus on the external, visible problems and neglect the root problems
- Disclaimer: both are important, but the order is internal 1st!
- **If we want to truly get right with God and experience revival then we must begin dealing with root sins. Whoso covereth his sin shall not prosper...**
- Illustr- the medical professionals in our church know that there are symptoms and then there are the real conditions. For example, most of us with a headache reach for a Tylenol instead of addressing dehydration, nutrition, sleep, stress, etc.
- Matthew 3:10- Quit clipping branches and going after twigs! Sinful habits can be repressed for a while...but they always come back. Why? We must lay the axe to the root
- We go after little twigs that are not really relevant. They're just the outward manifestation of the real problem. See the root of the tree is what's feeding all of the growth.
- A lot of it is invisible. A lot of it's under the surface. A lot of it, you can't even see.

I. Fruit sins vs. root sins

- a. In San Francisco some time ago, a report was given about a "Bleach Man," who was helping the city's AIDS problem. He was giving out free bottles of bleach to drug users so they could sterilize their needles! He is chopping off branches-not pulling up roots.

- b. The same error is found in sex-education in the public schools. Young unmarried girls are getting pregnant. The world's answer is to give them free methods of birth control. God's answer is to work on their heart, so it will be pure, and teach them self-control and the importance of virginity.
- c. In our text, the Pharisees were obsessed with the external evidence of righteousness and often contended with Jesus to make an outward demonstration in keeping with the "tradition of men" (Mk 7:8). They followed a tradition of elaborate ceremonial handwashing before a meal.
- d. Jesus clarifies- we are defiled from the inside out rather than from the outside in when it comes to ceremonial things like foods
- e. So we must make a distinction between fruit sins- visible and easy to identify- and root sins- invisible and harder to identify
- f. Gal. 5:19- the works of the flesh are manifest- they are evident/obvious but we need to search for the root.
- g. Illustr- removing apples from an apple tree does not change the identify of that tree!
- h. So we must avoid **superficial repentance**
 - i. Case- excessive shopper who stops temporarily after receiving the bank statements. Address the lack of contentment and covetousness in the heart! They may cut up credit cards and behaviorally restrict from the mall. They may become rigidly frugal and count every dime. But as they pick the tree clean of observable sin, what is going on beneath the surface? What is the nature of their self-centered and covetous heart?
 - ii. Case- immorality- real or virtual-addiction to pornography- a trillion dollar business! Getting caught may scare you into stopping, but the lust and selfishness must be addressed!

Surface fruit Underground root

Not smiling	No joy
Worldly clothing	Loving men's praise

Rock music	Rebellious heart
Pornography	Perverted mind
Marriage problems	Selfishness
Nervousness	Prayerlessness

- i. Many of the most common root sins include:
 - i. Lust- evil thoughts, immorality
 - ii. Bitterness- anger at circumstances or people (murder in the heart), unforgiveness
 - iii. Greed/covetousness- thefts, not content, materialistic
 - iv. Idolatry- exchanging God for something else. Am I willing to disobey God to have my desires satisfied? Am I looking to some object or practice to provide satisfaction that I can and should only get from God?
 - v. Unbelief- anxiety, discouragement, fear,
 - vi. Pride- this is the central sin- Satan, Adam and Eve in the garden- choosing our way over God's. Rebelliousness, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness. False witness- lying, cheating, etc.
 - vii. Until the root is addressed, these will continue to yield visible expressions of sin

- II. The heart of the matter
 - a. We are dealing with the heart- the center of a man
 - b. Prov. 4:23, Our hearts determine the course of our lives!
 - c. Jesus lists these evil things and explain they come from our innermost nature. They aren't accidents or mere "mistakes"; they reveal how corrupt we are in our fallen nature. "The heart is the source of man's true character..."
 - d. " 'Murders' begin not with the dagger, but with the malice of the soul. 'Adulteries and fornications' are first gloated over in the heart before they are enacted by the body. The heart is the cage from whence these unclean birds fly forth." (Spurgeon)
 - e. This is a 13-part list that exposes the kind of evil that lives in the human heart. You don't need to travel a long distance to find the source of these sins. You

don't need to conduct an exhaustive search. All you need to do is look at your own heart. "The source from which these rivers of pollution proceed is the natural heart of man. Sin is not a splash of mud upon man's exterior, it is a filth generated within himself." (Spurgeon)

- f. Jer. 17:9- **The heart** is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
 - g. James 1-The reality of our lust- temptations do not make us sin, we choose sin because of our own lust!
 - i. We are spring loaded to sin!
 - ii. We must be on guard and know our flesh!
 - h. So we must get honest and uncover our sin so that it may effectively be put to death! Necessary for revival! I John 1:7-9, II Chron. 7:14
 - i. Skipping daily devotions, church, opportunities for ministry- may indicate a deeper heart issue! Get clean!
 - j. Illustr- cleaning the garage/attic
- III. The remedy – the power of the cross, the Holy Spirit, and abiding in Christ
- a. Jer 13:23- Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.
 - b. Not reformation, but regeneration!
 - c. We need a new heart- salvation
 - d. II Cor 5:17- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
 - e. If I've been given a new nature/ heart, and been born again than why do I sin? The flesh is still there (Romans).
 - f. The remedy for the unsaved- the cross
 - g. The remedy for the saint- the cross
 - i. There is no death of sin without the death of Christ- John Owen
 - ii. Sin's power has been canceled!
 - iii. Sin has lost its grip on you! Release your grip on it!

- h. What's the solution? What can be more powerful than my addiction, my temper, my anxiety and depression, my sinful habits/indulgences?
- i. Self-hatred and disgust are not enough- we need a remedy!
- j. We need to address the root of our sin, and abide in the root of our victory
- k. John 15:1-5- Abiding in Christ, walking in the Spirit, not our own strength/flesh

Conclusion:

- As a pastor, I can only see the surface- but I know that the Holy Spirit can search all our hearts!
- Hebrews 4:12- For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- The healthiest people are the ones who realize how sick they are and go get healing. Run to the Healer today- Christ Jesus!
- Let's not focus only on unwashed hands, or going after the branches of sin- let's thoroughly deal with the root!
- It is much easier to repent of sins that we have committed than to repent of those we intend to commit.
- "Many people use mighty thin thread when mending their ways."
- Integrity and character- who you are when no one else is around. We must allow the Holy Spirit to work in these areas!
- Psalm 139:1-4, 23-24