

Pentecost 15 9/2/18
 Mark 7:14-23 17B

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."

Right after Jesus told the Pharisees and scribes that they had abandoned the commandments of God in order to follow the traditions of men, Jesus called all the people that were there with Him and said this,

"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" (vv.14b-15).

Now, you can rest assured that everybody who was there heard Jesus clearly, but not everybody *understood* what He was saying. In fact, His own disciples did not understand what He was saying. Notice that when they got back to the house, they showed what good Lutherans they were by asking that most Lutheran of questions, "What does this mean?"

This morning, you, a disciple, are in God's House. You are here in God's House with Jesus. When you are here, you hear the words of Jesus, but how often is it you find yourself asking, "What does this mean?" because the truth is, we don't know what it means. At least not all of it. That's ok, because Jesus is here to explain it to you. And He starts by saying this, "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" (vv. 18-19).

We get that. We understand that. You heard His words last week. He totally dispelled the notion that if you eat your food without washing your

hands according to the traditions of men, you are sinning. He taught us to follow the commandments of God, not the traditions of men.

We get that. We understand that means, under the freedom of the Gospel, God has declared all foods clean. The food laws of the Old Testament were part of the ceremonial law, meaning they were only for the Old Testament nation of Israel. They followed them to show that they were different from all the pagan nations living around them. But, Jesus, the Messiah, has come and fulfilled the law for us, so you don't have to follow food laws anymore. All foods are clean – so you can go to Red Lobster and eat all the shrimp your little heart desires; it's ok to eat a Canadian Bacon pizza; you can even eat blood sausage if you want (I'm not going to, but you are free to if you wish). So, it's not what you eat, what goes into you from the outside that makes you unclean. That's easy to understand.

But, that's not all that Jesus said. He also said this, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him" (v. 21). We hear that, but we don't understand that. We don't get that because when you think of what is inside of us, we think that we are loving, kind, generous, and gentle. We wouldn't hurt anyone. And, we are confirmed in our assessment of ourselves by the people around us. People that love us say such nice things about us.

Here's why we have trouble understanding His words. Jesus sees inside of us, that we are unclean, impure, unholy. And the problem is your heart. Jeremiah the Prophet says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it (17:9)?" And it is what comes out of your deceitful heart that defiles you. And Jesus gets pretty specific about that comes out of your heart,

“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” (vv. 21-23).

You hear that, but you don't understand it.

Jesus says it is what comes out of what's inside of us that defiles us. It's hard for us to understand because we say, well, no one really knows my thoughts. We put on a mask, a costume, to cover up what and who we really and truly are. We look good on the outside, in the eyes of our neighbor, especially our friends. It's easy to fool them because they don't know what's in here, in our sinful hearts. And, what you do in your own house, in your own room, is your business. And, besides, you have right to do it, right! So, you carry on that secret affair. It's just between the two of you and only the two of you will ever know about it. You lie, to your teacher. You are disgruntled and discontent because you are jealous of your neighbor. You allow the sun go down on your anger, and don't forgive and be reconciled. And besides, everyone knows what a scoundrel that other guy is anyway. And just in case they don't, you use your tongue to gossip, and defame and destroy their reputation.

Here's the thing – you just cannot understand that it is what is in your heart that defiles you. The things that come out of our deceitful hearts are so commonplace, so accepted, everybody is doing them. That's just the way the world is. So, it's no big deal. But, the Bible says that those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

“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 says (v. 15). But, here's the Good News, the really Good News for you

Dear Child of God. There is something outside of you that makes you pure, holy, and undefiled. Look at your bulletin cover. Look at that picture. Our righteousness comes from outside us, from Jesus Christ.

God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. Jesus took all the things that come out of your heart that defile you, all your evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness, and carried them all to the cross. There, He died as the wages of them all.

It works like this: His death, His burial, His resurrection on the 3rd day accomplished something that could never happen in your heart -- it won for you the entire forgiveness for all your sins. Jesus takes all that forgiveness He won by His death, His burial, and His resurrection and pours it out over your body in the water and the Word of your Baptism to wash away all of your sin, so that you are holy, without sin, before God. And, He feeds you with His body and blood, given and shed for you, and He speaks His Word into your ears so that they go into you to make you pure, holy, and undefiled.

And, as He makes you pure, holy, and undefiled, He also makes you a new creation. That means that you have a new heart, one that calls upon God's name in every trouble, praying, praising, and giving thanks; holds God's Word sacred, and gladly hears and learns it; honors those in authority over you, serves and obeys them, and loves and cherishes them; one that lives a sexually pure and decent life in what you say and do; one that does not gossip, but defends your neighbor, speaks well of him, and explains everything in the kindest way; a heart that is content with what you have been given, and forgives your neighbor just as God has forgiven you in Christ Jesus

All that because something outside of you have made you pure, holy, and undefiled. And that something is really somebody – Christ Jesus our Lord.