



**A BETTER
WORD**

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Inside Out or Outside In

Mark 7:1–23

THE BIG IDEA

If the heart is the cause of our uncleanness, then the heart is what needs to be addressed.

SERMON SUMMARY

There is no 5-second rule when it comes to moral cleanliness. The Pharisees had built a fence around the law, extending priestly washing to anyone who wanted to be considered devout, and when the disciples ate with unwashed hands the question that followed was an accusation. Jesus quotes Isaiah 29 straight at them — lips near, hearts far — and calls them hypocrites, from the Greek word for an actor in a mask.

Then comes the statement that rocks the whole system: nothing outside a person can defile him; what comes out is what defiles. Food enters the stomach, not the heart. But out of the heart come evil thoughts, immorality, theft, murder, coveting, deceit, envy, slander, pride. The heart is the seat of will and desire, which means our problem is not merely that we commit sins but that we are infected with sin at the core. Treat the symptoms without treating the disease and they keep returning. What is needed is a new heart, and that is what Jesus came to give.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The Jewish traditions began as a fence around the law, meant to protect it. How does a good intention like that turn into what Jesus calls “the tradition of men”? Where do you see that pattern in your own church culture or family?
2. Jesus applies Isaiah 29:13 to the Pharisees: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” What does it look like to honor God with your lips while your heart is elsewhere? How would you notice?
3. Work through the “corban” example in verses 10–13. What does it reveal about the lengths people will go to in order to look righteous while getting what they want?
4. Read the list in verses 21–22. Pick two of those sins and trace each one back to the heart condition underneath it. What does that show you about why behavior modification keeps failing?

5. Jeremiah 17:9 says the heart is deceitful and desperately sick; Ezekiel 36:26 promises a new heart. If the root problem is the heart rather than the behavior, what changes about how you pray when you sin?

LIVING IT OUT

Legalism does not just distort God's Word; it eventually distorts the person. And legalism always breeds hypocrisy.

Heart Check: Which sin do you keep confessing and keep repeating? Have you been asking God to change your behavior when what you actually need is for him to change what you want?

This Week: Take the sin you named and pray it differently this week: name the desire underneath it out loud to God, and ask him for a changed heart rather than better willpower. Write down what shifts.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

"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."

— **Mark 7:15**

Thank God that Jesus dealt with sin at the root and not just the surface — then ask him for the new heart that makes obedience a joy instead of a performance.

Your Prayer:

Find more sermon study guides, messages, and resources at **ABETTERWORD.ORG**