

Sunday service for 5th April 2020

Welcome (Ross Logan)

Hi everybody, thanks for joining us this morning, albeit in strange circumstances. I guess we're all getting used to doing everything just that little bit differently to normal.

Still, there's an upside. I've managed to catch up with a few people I've been meaning to ring, we've been able to have our Home group on the net, and we've discovered that, despite having our family scattered across the state, we can still get together for dinner using modern day technology. We're learning new things every day.

And, of course, we've learnt about a whole new regime of handwashing: soap and water, hand sanitiser, 20 seconds, sing Happy Birthday the list goes on.

Coincidentally, or not, we find as we look at Mark 7 today, that the Pharisees had a handwashing regime as well. Theirs was more ceremonial and passed down from their elders. However, today we'll find out more about the importance of inward cleansing rather than just outward ceremonies. That its important to be clean from the inside out, not just from the outside in.

So, join with us this morning to praise God, remembering David's words from Psalm 117:

*Praise the Lord, all nations!
Extol him, all peoples!
For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*

Prayer (Ross)

Dear Father, From the time we wake in the morning, to the time we go to sleep at night we have so much to praise you for. We are surrounded by examples of your majesty, power and love.

Your creation stares us in the face as we see the majesty of the sun and the rain, of plants and animals, the wonder of the bodies you have given us. You care for us, provide food and shelter, friends and family for us.

Yet, despite knowing all this, we don't always feel like acknowledging you. In times like this, as we struggle with sadness, as the reality of COVID-19 hits home, as we try to get used to and comply with new rules, we often think more about ourselves than about you.

Forgive us, help us to return to you and remember your constant love, your promises to never leave us, to provide the best for us. We know that you will renew our hearts and souls, that through your Spirit we can have peace, that you will draw us close to you.

We've read over the last couple of weeks how quickly the disciples could get caught up in what was happening and forget the demonstrations of your power and who you are. Help us this morning not to be distracted, but instead to have clear heads and humble hearts, ready to acknowledge you, to come close to you and to learn of your purposes for us. In Jesus' name. Amen

Songs (modern)

Only a Holy God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HSdeeCm8_g

Song (traditional)

O for a thousand tongues

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O9kw3cILpg>

Bible Reading – Mark 7:1-22 (NIV)

“The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus² and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.³ (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.⁴ When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”⁶ He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”⁹ And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honour your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’¹¹ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God) —¹² then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.¹³ Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”¹⁴ Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”^[16]¹⁷ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.¹⁸ “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them?¹⁹ For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)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 sexual immorality, theft, murder,²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance & folly.²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

Announcements

- **Focus for April – Easter.** Easter is going to be different this year. No church services. No holidays away. No times of joy. But the truth of Easter will be the same this year. Jesus has died for our sins. Jesus has risen again and defeated death. Jesus is coming again in judgement. So what can you do this month to celebrate Easter? How can we as a Church make Easter what it used to be, the most important time of the year.
- **Easter Services.** We will be running the following Easter Services
 - **Easter Thursday 7-8pm via ZOOM**
 - **Good Friday. Via Paper and Interactive services**
 - **Resurrection Sunday AM. Via paper and Interactive services followed by a ZOOM morning tea from 10:45**
 - Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/630573464?pwd=RXVtWFFvSGZCdXlOK1FTMkVnV1FJUT09>
Meeting ID: 630 573 464 Password: 949109
 - **Sunday @ 6 Resurrection Sunday Service. Via ZOOM**
Join Zoom Meeting (Click link at 6pm on Sunday to join)
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/752447783?pwd=dHhTcXRHUHZTR3ZkNVm5VEYvNERlQT09>
Meeting ID: 752 447 783 Password: 496711
- **Face masks.** Some of the ladies have been making material face masks for those who are most vulnerable to COVID-19 and who might be mixing with others in their homes or while they are out shopping. Either Julie Hearn or Stephen could drop a couple of these around to you on request.

- **Our services.** How are our services going? We want to improve them but that will be dependent upon your feedback, good and bad. So, if you have bouquets or brickbats please send them to Stephen, Jon or one of the elders
 - **Prayer.** In the midst of a once in a century event please find extra time to pray. We have started a Church prayer times on ZOOM each weekday at 7pm. It is easy to join and you can even do it from your home phone. If you wish to know how, speak to Jon for more details.
 - **School Holidays.** Our small groups and our youth groups and playgroups will not be meeting (virtually) for two weeks starting from Good Friday. Please pray for those who lead those groups as it has been a tremendous amount of work to keep them running during the COVID-19 crisis.
 - **Collection.** If you normally gave each Sunday as the collection bag went around why not organise a direct deposit to our bank account Commonwealth Kotara BSB 062 829 A/c 1019 4850 or send a cheque to the Church once a month to Charlestown Presbyterian Church PO Box 41 (please note last week's PO Box was wrong), Charlestown 2290.
 - **Days Off.** Stephen and Jon try to take Saturdays off from work. If you need them and it is an emergency please still ring. Otherwise if you could leave it until Sunday, they would be most appreciative.
 - **Pastoral Care.** Could you please fill in the pastoral care form as soon as possible? Stephen wants to provide the help to all that need it and to do that he needs a form filled out for everyone over 12.
- The most efficient way for us to process this information would be by;**
1. Filling in the following Google document
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdy27Gm9p35L0fDxGCVPfAcp7Q7qXpQKUquwouZGSjecOUEEQ/viewform?usp=sf_link
 2. If that is not possible, could you please send the answers via email to sktaylor1997@gmail.com
 3. If not, by text to Stephen on 0426 82 90 80.
 4. And if that is not possible, please send them in the post to Stephen @ 19 Imperial Close, Floraville 2280.
- **Annual Congregational Meeting** will now be via ZOOM on Monday 27th April. More details later.

Family Matters

You can access this via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qz1ihlBUotU>

Today I am going to interview Jo Barlow about how to cope with the COVID-19 virus especially if we are stuck inside. Jo helped o-author a longer article on the subject that can be found at

<http://gsandc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/GSC-Covid-19-Coping-with-anxiety-and-fear.pdf>

In that article there are some tips about how you can look after yourself at this time.

Look after yourself

- Care for your physical health: get sufficient sleep, eat a healthy diet, get outside, exercise.
- Even if you are in self-isolation, make an effort to connect by phone, email or video chat with family and friends who can support you and whom you can support.
- Monitor your internal dialogue as well as how you speak to others. Avoid using catastrophic language. Try saying 'that's concerning', rather than 'that's awful'.
- Practice simple relaxation techniques such as progressive muscular relaxation and calm breathing.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol, and use of other non-prescribed drugs.
- Anxiety usually seeks out confirmation which could make anxiety worse. It is good to acknowledge and understand your emotions and then to turn your mind to things that are achievable e.g. make your bed, get dressed, go for a walk, listen to upbeat music, read a book, do some cooking or gardening. Focus on things that you can do or find someone to talk to who will give you an accurate perspective.
- Be aware of your assumptions. Someone who coughs does not necessarily carry the virus.

- Be aware of behaviour that reinforces anxiety. Don't stay in bed. Keep your areas clear and clean. Get yourself to outside and enjoy the sunrise and the trees, stretch your muscle, smile and hum.
- Practice gratitude. This is an opportune time to call someone to thank them for something they do, say or model that encourages you.

You can know the presence of God in this crisis. He promises his protection, guidance and love. Psalm 73 says "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory". As we have to depend on the Lord more fully, we will become more conscious of his presence and care. That may be the best outcome of a terrible crisis.

Kids Song Our sins are many his mercy I more

What love could remember, no wrongs we have done

Omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum

Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore

Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Praise the Lord. His mercy is more

Stronger than darkness. New every morn'.

Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Kids programme If you have kids from 0-12 Suzie has sent you an email that you can use as a Home Kids Church! Or click on the link <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6907570>

Prayer. (Tom B)

Our Lord and Heavenly Father, how great is your name over all the Earth! You alone are worthy of praise, for you have redeemed a broken people. And we are those broken people, Father. We are a people who have forsaken your way and followed our own path. We are a people who praise and pursue things that are not praiseworthy. Yet you are patient with us, you are gracious to us and you sent your son to take the punishment for these and our uncountable sins. So Lord, we thank you that your love is greater than even the count of our sins and ask that we will hold to these truths in the months to come.

Lord, the COVID-19 virus continues to spread, to take lives and to make so many aspects of life more difficult to live. Most of what we hear is negative and many of us allow this to influence our thinking and attitude. Help us to remember your blessings as we adapt to increasingly more challenging restrictions on our freedom. For those people who have to make decisions that affect a population, whether a family, church, organisation, electorate, state or country, we ask for your wisdom and guidance. We pray that the best steps will be taken to ensure that casualties are minimised and the spread of the disease is stifled. Challenge people to be gracious rather than selfish. And we pray that a breakthrough will eventuate soon, that a vaccine for this disease will be developed and that it will be distributed efficiently. We also ask that we Christians will be bold in serving those around us in any capacity, to be a shining light through this darkness.

We turn our eyes to India, father, where persecution of Christians and other religious groups has risen rapidly in recent times. Father, we ask that you intervene in India, keeping Christians safe from Hindu extremists and the overwhelming corruption that is allowing such behaviour to continue. We pray for those serving you in India, that you will provide comfort and safety and opportunities to grow that nation in the gospel. Influence key leaders in that nation so that the practices of the extremists are halted. And bring more people into your kingdom through the faithful preaching of your gospel.

Father, we pray for those facing various challenges at present, both through the changes taking place in our society due to COVID-19 but also through the regular pressures of life that can be overwhelming. Father, we pray for those social ills that can breed in this environment, such as gluttony, greed, alcoholism, drug use and domestic violence. Again, we ask that you minimise these issues, Lord, and that you will offer victims a way out and perpetrators forgiveness as they repent. For those who have lost jobs, we thank you for the steps the government has taken to try to assist them at this time. We ask that you help ensure basic needs to be met for those in difficult circumstances. For those still at work, putting themselves at risk or adapting to new ways of fulfilling the requirements of their roles, we pray for safety, patience and increased capacity to love and serve. Help us all to consider the lonely, the desperate, the elderly and the mentally ill as they feel increasingly isolated.

And through all of this, we ask that more eyes will be open to the world that is to come rather than living in a society who commits itself to this creation we have broken. Open eyes to the love shown through Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Give us opportunities to use this Easter season as a time of rejoicing in your goodness to us. We bring all of these prayers to you in the loving name of Jesus. Amen.

Bible Reading – Mark 7:24-37

²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” ²⁸ “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” ²⁹ Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” ³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

³¹ Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. ³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means “Be opened!”). ³⁵ At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. ³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” (NIV)

Song. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90GRAbiY8iQ>

Sermon. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UleVWJVwvY8>

The Coronavirus has reminded us of our constant need to ensure that our hands are clean. For this is one way that this virus has spread. Through touch. Direct touch at times, through hand shaking or through physical contact between person to person. As well as through indirect touch. So after we go on buses or ships or go through gates or touch handles we also need to clean our hands because we don’t want this infectious disease to spread to us. And a simple way to prevent that is through washing our hands.

Now that works for hygiene but does it work also for spirituality? Can other people’s actions infect us? Can things that are bad make us bad? Well think of your toothbrush. It’s good to have clean teeth isn’t it? We need our teeth to be strong, healthy and clean and so hopefully we brush our teeth regularly to achieve that. But does that affect our speech? Does having a clean mouth stop us from swearing? Does it mean only true, encouraging and helpful words come out of our mouths? Of course not.

Just as your Mum washing your mouth out with soap was never going to clean up your speech, so neither will a good scrubbing with a toothbrush. That can only affect our appearance, our outsides, which by the way is a good thing, a great thing for our health. But it will never do anything with the source of our words, our insides, our heart.

That's what Jesus wants to talk about today. Not clean teeth, nor clean hands, nor clean actions but a clean heart. How can we really be clean on the inside? How can we live lives of purity and holiness? And is there anything we can do today to somehow scotch guard our lives so that the dirt of the world doesn't get in? Well when we pick up the action with Jesus there is a dispute between him and the Pharisees over clean hands.

1. Clean Hands (verses 1-13)

"The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus ² & saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (The Pharisees & all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) ⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?"

The Pharisees are accusing Jesus and his disciples of behaving like Gentiles. They haven't washed their hands. They're ignorant of basic Jewish customs, dealing with ceremonial cleanliness in the sight of God. But this is was not about hygiene and the stop of infectious diseases. It is about godliness and not allowing uncleanliness to enter into our spiritual lives.

You see God wants his people to be different, holy, distinct from others. So how do we achieve that level of holiness? Well we will follow God's law to the letter & we avoid people who don't want to follow God's law. We will not join with them when they eat or drink in case what they do rubs off on us. And in a way that makes sense, perfect sense.

But the Pharisees went one step further. They took God's law and built a fence around it. Actually, in the Mishnah, a second century compilation of Jewish oral laws it says *"Tradition is a fence around the law."* So, they purposely built up traditions that meant that you weren't even tempted to go even close to breaking the law.

Remember Jesus has previously been in trouble with the Pharisees because the disciples had picked heads of grain on the Sabbath. That was the fence they had just gone over. You see you couldn't work on the Sabbath for that breaks God's fourth commandment. So, the teachers of the law said will let's make sure we don't even go close to working. So, they made a law that one can't even pick grain on the Sabbath, so the disciples who have picked grain have jumped the fence and are now working in Sabbath breaking territory!

Now before we get too hard on the Pharisees that is not a bad desire that they have is it? To remain pure, to be clean and holy and to not break God's commandments. To not let the dirt, the moral filth around us come inside of our lives. To not even give it a chance. That makes sense to me. And so sometimes we do something similar. We build fences around God's ways to make sure we don't even go close to breaking his commandments.

Let me give you two examples that were part of my discipleship when I first became a Christian. The first one has to do with alcohol. The Bible says clearly, we should not get drunk. So, what is the easiest way of making sure I don't get drunk? I abstain from alcohol completely. That will build a fence that means that I won't even get close to getting drunk.

A second example? Pre-marital sex. That is a temptation for many when they start dating. So, to protect people from breaking God's law, we build a fence saying there are certain parts of another person's body that you can't touch because that could lead to an increased desire. But where do you draw the line, where do you build the fence? Touching below the waste, below the neck, holding hands, kissing, dancing, lipstick? So, we build fences.

But the issue then becomes if I construct the fence at a different point than you, will you judge me because I jumped your fence in order to get there? We can be so like the Pharisees in that our laws become more important than God's laws. Which is Jesus point.

"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honour me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.' ⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions." The danger is that our fences becomes more important than God's laws. That our traditions become the touchstone of faith.

And so, Jesus gives the Pharisees an example of where they got it all so wrong. ⁹ *"You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honour your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. ¹¹ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— ¹² then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. ¹³ Thus you nullify the word of God."*

Do you get it? The Pharisees began by wanting to keep and uphold God's law and his ways. But by adding a fence, by adding their own laws and putting them on an equal standing with God's laws and or even over time above God's law, they placed their emphasis on outward actions, on clean hands so to speak. When clean hands aren't as important as a clean heart.

Rules, laws, traditions, look like they are signs of spiritual cleanliness. They look like and feel like they should lead to a greater holiness. But instead they can rob God's word of its power. They can lead to legalism, to hypocrisy because they don't deal with the root cause of our sin. For it's not about clean hands its more about a

2. Clean heart (verses 14-23)

¹⁴ *"Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."* Food is not what defiles us. It won't affect your spiritual health because it doesn't go into the heart or the mind. For the biggest corruptive elements are not outside of us but inside of us. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

Preacher Daniel Akin puts it this way, *"Sin always proceeds from within. Food ends up in the stomach but sin begins in the heart. Food is eaten, digested in the stomach & expelled. Sin however remains in the heart & then produces all manner of defilement & death. The basic problem of fallen humanity is not what we do but who we are. Real filth, defilement &*

impurity are inside” for v21-23 go on to say ²¹“For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²²adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance & folly ²³All these evils come from inside & defile us.”

Evil acts come from an unclean source. But it is not unclean food or unclean people. Food doesn’t make us commit adultery. People don’t force us to be greedy or arrogant. These things come from inside of us. So rather than fencing the uncleanliness of the evil around you by adding more laws, it is more important to attack the problem at its source. The heart. Which is why Jesus brought an end to such ceremonial laws. They highlighted the problem but didn’t deliver a solution.

So, getting back to the two issues I raised prior that of drink and pre marriage sex. I can abstain from drink and so never get drunk and then judge others unfairly for going into a pub and having a beer or two. I can make sure I am never drunk but if my heart is not right, I might be filled with pride for being better than my brother.

Or alternatively I can build a fence to help keep myself pure in my relationships but without Jesus changing my heart and dealing with my desires I will still jump that fence and every other fence ever constructed because the power of desire within me is stronger than the power of wanting to serve Jesus. Thus, rules make us proud and will lead us away from the God who is the source of all godliness.

Friends, clean hands are not enough. You and I need a clean heart. Dealing with our external temptations will never give us power over our internal desires. So the question then comes to us, how do you & I become clean on the inside? Well Mark now will lead us to a story that will help us find a solution to that question. Funnily enough it’s all about an unclean woman.

3. Unclean? (verses 24-30)

²⁴“Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret...a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶The woman was a Greek...”

Now if you had an unclean gigameter this woman would be off the scale. She’s from Tyre, modern day Lebanon, a country that is one of Israel’s longest standing enemies. She’s a Greek, a gentile so she doesn’t have any historical connection with God or his ways. She’s a woman which means at that time, she has very little social standing or influence and her daughter has an unclean spirit. Really there is uncleanliness wherever this woman looks.

And what’s worse is that Jesus doesn’t make it particularly easy for this woman. *“She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”*

Did I hear right? Did Jesus really call the Gentiles, dogs? Let’s walk it through step by step. This woman is saying to Jesus I want, no I need your help, your mercy, your bread of life. And Jesus is saying in reply, first, first let the children, the family of God, the Jews eat what they want. And that is what Jesus had been doing up until now. He had been feeding the Jews the bread of life first of all. That was why he had come. Yes later he would send his disciples to the Gentiles with the good news but the children must come first, before the household pets, the dogs have their day.

This was a test of faith for the woman. Do you know your place in salvation history? Do you understand that God wants to work through the Jewish nation first before he gets to the Gentiles? But this woman is

just about to pass this test of faith with flying colours. For Jesus is currently in the vicinity of Tyre and amongst a Gentile population. And this woman realises that God does care for all people Jew and Gentile and so she responds with faith, great faith. ²⁸ *“Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”*

Yes, feed the children, let them have what they want, what they need, the woman replies back. But make sure we Gentiles get something as well, and we are more than happy with the crumbs from the table of God. For a crumb of God is still enough to get rid of the demon in my daughter. A crumb of grace is more than what I need & that is why I have come to you

Derek Thomas says *“Now this woman didn't have a Bible. She knew nothing of the New Testament. She knew nothing of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone apart from the works of the law. But she knew this much: that the answer to her problem, the answer to her predicament lay in one person and in one person alone. Jesus... And no matter what the obstacles, no matter what the difficulties, she persevered. She would not take no for an answer. She believes... And Jesus says of her, ‘Your faith is great’.*

Here is the first Gentile believer in the book of Mark. Someone who outwardly is unclean but whose faith is reaching out to God. And her uncleanliness is not going to rub off on Jesus but Jesus cleanliness is going to rub off on her and her unclean daughter. That’s where holiness is going to come from. That’s where a heart might be cleansed. When it comes to Jesus in humble, trusting, heartfelt faith. But Mark doesn’t want to stop there. He wants to weave one last strand into his story and show us how Jesus

4. **Cleansed** a death and dumb man (verses 31-37)

³¹ *Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre & went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee & into the region of the Decapolis”. So, he’s still in Gentile territory. ³² “There some people brought to him a man who was deaf & could hardly talk & they begged Jesus to place his hand on him”.*

It looks like Jesus is about to jump another fence. Another Gentile. This time one who is tied up with massive physical disabilities! ³³ *“After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears”.* He takes this man aside, this is not a circus, this is a human being with a need of the touch of Jesus. Which is what he does for him. This man can’t hear or understand so Jesus uses a sort of sign language.

So, He communicates to him in the only language this man can understand. He puts his fingers in his ears, as though He were saying to him, “I am going to do something with your hearing. I’m going to do something with your tongue, with your speech.” Jesus is entering this man's world. Jesus is coming right down to where this man is. And healing him. Making him better. Whole again. God does something. He touches this man and transforms him. And the results don’t take time like with a doctor or some medicine. They’re instantaneous.

No one who is unclean is beyond the cleansing of Jesus. No one is too far away to receive the touch of Jesus. The law wasn’t going to change this man and his life. The rules of men would never have the power to bring about such a transformation. Even when this man shows no outward signs of faith, Jesus can still do his work of changing him and his heart.

Rules have their place but they will never change our heart. We can clean our outsides but it will never change our insides. Only Jesus can do that. Only Jesus can turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Only Jesus can give us the heart transplant that we all truly need. And that new heart is available whether you

are a Jew or a Gentile, a man or a woman, showing signs of faith or no signs of faith. We are saved by grace. God's grace. And the response to that grace is not obedience, it is not keeping the law, it is faith. Humble faith. Being willing to receive the crumbs of grace from the table because a crumb of grace from God is enough.

Friend, cleanliness, holiness doesn't come from following the law. From fencing ourselves away from evil. It comes through faith in Jesus Christ. That's what you need as you think about alcohol, sex, pride, greed, jealousy. You need Jesus help, Jesus strength. Just Jesus.

Closing Song

Modern Cornerstone https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3HH_-1Zbs
Traditional My hope is built on nothing less <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWdNgXSd46Y>

Benediction

As we leave our time of worship, hear these words from Mark's gospel. ³⁷ "People were overwhelmed with amazement. *"He has done everything well,"* (NIV). Remember Jesus still does everything well, so trust him today with your life, your fears, your hopes and your future.

Virtual Morning Tea

We would normally be having morning tea so in its place we would love for you to now make up to 3 x 10-minute phone calls

1. To someone in the Church you haven't seen/spoken to for a while
2. To someone in the church you don't know, just look up your Church phonebook and give them a call.
3. A non-Christian you know. Just to see how they are going & if there is anything you can do to help.