

The Gospel According to Mark - The Pharisees Had Issues

The Pharisees Had Issues Mark 7:1-23

"I'm not enough unless you come, will you meet me here again Cause all I want is all you are, will you meet me here again?" What a powerful statement and question! When we admit we are not enough and we need God to meet us where we are and make up for what we lack, then we find ourselves in a place to be truly blessed by God! And I'm not just talking about material blessings but blessings of purpose, meaning, joy, vision, hope, anticipation, gratitude, and the blessing of God's very presence in our lives and that changes everything! However, there are things that can and will prevent these blessings from becoming a reality in our lives. We're going to talk about some of these potential blessing destroyers today as we hear about a group of religious people who had some serious spiritual issues! Let's pray and ask God to inform us and inspire us through His Word today! Prayer!

When I lived in Pleasant Grove, Alabama, I had a wonderful Doctor from China. He was brilliant! However, his English was still a bit broken. Hey, I'm from Mississippi and I struggle with English too, so I'm not judging! But after one of my physicals, he talked to me. He said "Issue #1...mitral valve prolapse - maybe some blood flow between chambers." I said is that serious? He said: "Not a problem, not too bad, not to worry! Issue #2...Some scaring on lungs. Have you ever worked around hazardous substance?" I said, I don't think so, is it serious? He said: Not too bad, not to worry! Maybe from past Pneumonia or something. Issue #3...Bad cholesterol not too high, but good cholesterol not high enough!" I said is that serious? He said: "Not to worry, we can get that better, just drink a little red wine." I said, "But Doc, I don't drink!" He said, "I not tell you to drink for enjoyment, but for a medicine!" I said, "well I'll figure something out!" I know the Bible doesn't say you can't drink a drop, but I just don't want to turn a switch on I'll have to fight to turn off! I've got enough things to deal with and I know me! And one other reason, for me: When I face difficulties and discouragement's in life, I want Jesus to be my go to! Okay, what does this have to do with our message? My doctor was talking to me about physical health issues. The Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day had some spiritual health issues and they were so serious that it was destroying their spiritual health. These issues were so serious they were leading them to do some pretty devastating things to others, and their issues were robbing them of the blessings of God we talked about just a few moments ago. They were losing their purpose, meaning, joy, vision, hope, and their relationship with God was at an all time low! Turn with me to The Gospel According to Mark, chapter 7, and let's look at and learn from these issues.

Mark 7:1-5

Mark 7:1 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and

Mark 7:2 saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed.

Mark 7:3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.

Mark 7:4 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.)

Mark 7:5 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 'unclean' hands?"

Issue # 1 - A Judgmental Spirit

What causes a judgmental spirit?

A. Pride – don't think you have any issues

A person ruled by self pride thinks they don't need help from anybody and are blind to their own issues! This leads to a judgmental spirit. The Psalmist put it this way...

Psa 10:4 In his pride the wicked does not seek Him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

The writer of Proverbs said this...

Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov 16:19 Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

Another cause of a Judgmental Spirit is...

Arrogance - thinking you know what's best for everybody else

Arrogance is sinful and dangerous. Listen to these words also found in the Psalms...

Psa 94:4 They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting.

Psa 94:5 They crush your people, O LORD; they oppress your inheritance.

Psa 94:6 They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless.

Psa 94:7 They say, "The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed."

The writer of Proverbs puts it this way...

Prov 21:24 The proud and arrogant man--" Mocker" is his name; he behaves with overweening pride.

A third cause of a judgmental spirit is...

C. Ignorance - you don't know what's on another person's heart, or why they do what they do

This is not just a Pharisee issue! It was not just a Jewish issue. It was not just a Gentile issue, it was also a Christian issue and that's why Paul wrote the following words to the Christians at a church in Ephesus...

Eph 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Eph 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

I know I'm going to just blow some of your minds with what I'm about to say, but sometimes I listen to Bluegrass Music. Yep, this old rocker has a soft spot in his heart for some good old Bluegrass. I was driving the other day and heard a song by Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers. Here's some of the lyrics...

"She was only driving 20 on the highway into town
The man behind her honked his horn

Saying, 'Put that cell phone down,
You're gonna make me late to work, Honey I ain't got all day.'

He didn't know her dad was on the line,
Telling her, her mom just passed away

It's hard to know what someone's going through,
Unless you're standing right there in their shoes

Lord help me stop and understand,
Before I rush to judge my fellow man

Life itself can be a battlefield
And we're all fighting some kind of war

What did Jesus have to say about a judgmental spirit?

Mat 7:1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

Mat 7:2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Mat 7:3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"

Issue # 2 - Serious Heart Conditions

In Mark 7:6-13 of our text Jesus surprises the Pharisees with His answer to their question about the washing of hands...

Mark 7:6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Mark 7:7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

Mark 7:8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Mark 7:9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

Mark 7:10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'

Mark 7:11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God),

Mark 7:12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother.

Mark 7:13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Here's a list of the serious heart conditions the Pharisee's had, and my Chinese Doctor would not have said "Not to worry," but would have put them in the hospital in critical care! Here's the list of their heart conditions...

Insincere, Cold and Non-caring, Hard, Deceptive, Unrepentant

Let's take a quick look at these, because if we have any of these spiritual heart conditions we need to deal with them.

A. Insincere

Mark 7:6 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

God doesn't want a people who just look good on the outside! It's not a religious show God wants, but a relationship that shows the world what it looks like to love God and to be loved by God! If you've ever been told something special by someone only to find out it was insincere, that hurts! How do we not think God is not hurt by insincerity? Another heart condition the Pharisees had was that of being...

Cold and Non-caring

Mark 7:7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

Jesus said this in Matthew's Gospel...

Mat 23:1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:

Mat 23:2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

Mat 23:3 So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

Mat 23:4 They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Mat 23:5 "Everything they do is done for men to see..."

This kind of spiritual heart condition leads to another, even more serious condition...

Hard Hearted

Mark 7:8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Mark 7:9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

And what were the commands of God? We talk about them a lot around here at Northshore Church because they are the basis, the foundation, for our Mission...

"Transforming Worship, People, and the World!"

How do we do this? Jesus said the greatest command of God is to...

Mark 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with

all your strength.'

Mark 12:31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

We'll see those again in a few weeks. The Pharisees had set aside the commands of God and it was destroying their spiritual hearts.

The Psalmist put it this way...

Psa 73:7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity ; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.

Psa 73:8 They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression.

Psa 73:9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.

In case you're wondering if you have this condition you might consider the following verse...

Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Another symptom of this serious spiritual heart condition is that the heart becomes...

Deceptive

Mark 7:11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God),

Mark 7:12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother.

The religious leaders were finding ways to be deceptive and to break the spirit of the law. The spirit of the law was that children should care for their elderly parents, however, there were those who didn't want to do that so they would claim their extra funds were dedicated to God and the religious leaders would allow that. I'm pretty sure those funds never got to God. The writer of Proverbs said this...

Prov 6:12 A scoundrel and villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth,

Prov 6:13 who winks with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers,

Prov 6:14 who plots evil with deceit in his heart-- he always stirs up dissension.

The Pharisees were always stirring up dissension.

Paul put it this way in Colossians...

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

And one of the most dangerous symptoms of a serious spiritual heart condition is that it becomes...

Unrepentant

Mark 7:13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.

They did many things like that because they were unrepentant. Repent means to turn away from evil and to turn towards God! Their hearts had become unrepentant.

Jesus said this in The Gospel of Luke...

Luke 13:3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

And this in Matthew's Gospel...

Mat 13:15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

Okay, are you ready for...

Issue # 3: External Appearances Were Their Priority

Mark 7:14-23

Mark 7:14 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.

Mark 7:15 Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"

Mark 7:16 (If any man has ears to hear, let him hear) (Not found in earlier manuscripts, thought to have been added by a scribe) not in the NIV

Mark 7:17 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

Mark 7:18 "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'?

Mark 7:19 For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

Mark 7:20 He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'

Mark 7:21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

Mark 7:22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

Mark 7:23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

You see they washed the outside and forgot the inside! The outside of the glass, pan or plate is the least important when it comes to cleaning.

They evidently had forgotten the Scripture that says:

1 Sam 16:7b . . . The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

How important is the inside of you? The writer of Proverbs says "very!"

Prov 4:20 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.

Prov 4:21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;

Prov 4:22 for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.

Prov 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

How Important? If the inside is bad the outside will be bad! Jesus gave this example in Matthew's Gospel...

Mat 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Why would He say this? Because outward sin always begins on the inside! Every action begins with an attitude and attitudes are from within! Jesus was a good spiritual doctor and was good at seeing the inside even without x-ray, cat-scan or MRI. He said...

Mat 6:23 . . . If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

What's on the inside will eventually come out. James said...

James 1:13-15 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Okay, Pastor Larry please tell me there's a cure for all these Spiritual heart conditions! Can a Pharisee change? I've got some great good news...

There is a cure!

If we let Jesus clean the inside everything changes! Paul, who was once a Pharisee of Pharisees who had gotten so hard hearted he was a part of putting Christians in prison and was there giving approval to the stoning of Stephen. But he met the Lord when on his way to persecute more Christians and God told him this...

Acts 26:12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the

chief priests.

Acts 26:13 About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

Acts 26:14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

A goad was a wooden instrument that farmers used to get a stubborn ox to move. If the ox kicked against the goad there was pain! Evidently God had already been convicting Paul's heart, because God mentioned how Paul was kicking back against God's calling on his heart. Paul continues...

Acts 26:15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.

Acts 26:16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

Acts 26:17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Paul had a choice to make! What would he do? Continue to kick against the goads, or be obedient. Paul gives us the answer in verse 19...

Acts 26:19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

On that day, Saul became Paul, and everything changed for Paul. The inside changed. Paul would go on to write much of the New Testament. Paul would later pen these powerful words of testimony in his letter to the Philippian Church...

Phil 3:4b ...If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

Phil 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

Phil 3:6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Phil 3:7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Phil 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Phil 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Phil 3:11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

Phil 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Folks, that's a Pharisee with a new heart! There is a cure, there is a prescription. It's Jesus and what He did when He died on the cross for your sins. But like Paul, you've got to decide whether or not you will be obedient to what God has shown you! Will you ask Jesus to cleanse your heart of it's sin disease? If you do you will understand these words the former Pharisee wrote...

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Let's pray!

