

Sermon for The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: August 29, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

Gospel Reading: Mark 7:14-23

Sermon Text: Mark 7:14-23

Sermon Title: Making Us Jesus-Clean



Hymns:

- LSB 684 – Come unto Me Ye Weary
- LSB 692 – Praise to You and Adoration
- LSB 594 – God's Own Child I'll Gladly Say It
- LSB 692 – Praise to you and Adoration
- LSB 693 – O Holy Spirit Grant Us Grace
- LSB 686 – Come Thou Font of Every Blessing

Liturgy:

Prayer and Preaching

Songs:

- By Our Love
- Another in the Fire
- Wake Up Sleeper
- Another in the Fire
- The River
- Holy Is the Lord

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Mark 7:14-23

[Jesus] 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.” And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? 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?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 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.”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the Gospel readings Jesus is continuing a conversation with the Scribes and Pharisees. Now if there was anybody who looked spiritually clean it was the Scribes and Pharisees. They were all about the show; the display. They looked religiously clean. They followed all the rules and regulations in Torah Law concerning matters of appearance. Even more the traditions of the elders, which grew out of trying to obey Torah Law. It was all about what you could and could not touch, what you could and could not eat, how and what to wash, and so much more.

They knew the Law. They knew the Commandments, all 613 of them. They knew it. The problem was in their hearts. In their hearts was all those awful things Jesus mentioned: evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. Because in their hearts, even as they were accusing the disciples of being defiled and unclean, they were already plotting Jesus' death.

We see the same stuff today, whenever there's another shooting, we ask how did this happen? Who was this guy? The news is filled with interviews about how the person appeared so normal, so good, so clean. People are surprised that such an awful thing could come out of such a good, clean-cut person, who smiles and is so friendly, who loves animals and helps little old ladies across the street.

Then there's all the uncleanness in our hearts. The uncleanness that comes spewing out when someone cuts you off in traffic. It's when you don't get what you want or think you deserve. It's when you feel dismissed or insulted by someone. It's the uncleanness that comes out when we know we can do something and get away with it, so we do. It's the thoughts that shouldn't be there. It's the murder of someone's reputation through gossip and lie. It's the pride that wants others to change for me, instead of me changing or helping them.¹ It's the presumption of guilt when it comes to others, but the demand of innocence when it comes to me. It's the impatience, the condescending, the get out of my way attitude.

It's all that and more, isn't it? It might surprise the person next to you if they knew all that was fermenting in your heart, sometimes it might even surprises you at what comes out of your heart, your secret thoughts. The shameful sins, impulses and desires deep down.

Here's the bigger problem. Jesus isn't surprised. That's sad. That's hard to admit, but, defiled and unclean as we are, we still know it's true. Jesus knows those unclean thoughts. Jesus knows our hearts desire, even when our hearts are dark as coal.

1 **1 Corinthians 9:22-23** – To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

That's why He came. He came, not with gloves on, to protect Himself from our sins, but in our flesh and blood, to take our sin. To take it all and keep it for Himself. How many of you would reach down deep into a trash bin on an hot August day. Most of us hold our breath just to open it and toss something in. Then maybe sanitize our hands quickly. Jesus didn't hold His breath or protect His hands. He jumped in. He bathed in it. He wallowed in it. He came to drink it all up. He came to take it.

He came not with a bucket and gloves, but to fill fonts, chalices and pulpits with His Holy Blood and Holy Word to cleanse us; to clean us from the inside out. In every Holy Baptism, in every Holy Communion, every sermon and absolution, the Holy Spirit does His cleansing work, and wash away the filth, the stench, the sin.

None of it is hidden from His sight or too deep for His holy deep cleaning. Sometimes we might think we wish God didn't know, but if He didn't, how could we know we are forgiven? He knows. That's why He died. He knew the hot-August-stench-filled garbage bin, that is us, is filled with poison. A poison called sin. Yet knowing that, knowing your heart, He still jumped in and drank it all down.² To drink every drop of the filth, the stench, the sin. He knows. That's why He came.

Now we know. We know that if He knows, He forgives. From the littlest of them to the most shameful. All of them.

You see, on that cross, the anti-Scribe, the anti-Pharisees, the anti-you hung. There, the One who was completely clean and pure, the One who knew no sin,³ the One whose heart is filled only with love and life, not only looked like sin, but became sin. He became the rotting food in the hot-August-stench-filled garbage bin. He became that for you.

All that is inside of you is dragged outside and hung up on the cross, for you. His Blood shed there now fill our eyes and ears, our mouths and hearts, and makes you holy. His "I forgive you"⁴ filling us with faith, and giving us the deep cleaning we need. The deep cleaning we can get nowhere else. Because of the cross things are now different for you. The cleansing of Jesus' death, and the defeat of Death in His resurrection, now means a new reality for you.

The truth is, the stench of sin may be hidden in our hearts, but it's really not all that hidden. You can still see its affect everywhere. Even though we are forgiven and clean sin's affect is still prevalent. It's in the death and disease, the injury and

2 **John 12:27** – "Now My soul is troubled. What shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? It is for this purpose I have come to this hour."

3 **2 Corinthians 5:21** – For our sake He [*God the Father*] made Him [*Jesus, God the Son*] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him [*Jesus*] we might become the righteousness of God.

4 **John 20:23** – If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. [*Here Jesus dispenses the Office of the Keys, that you hear at the beginning of each worship service in holy Absolution.*]

misfortune, our bodies breaking down, wearing out and constantly under assault by the evil one.

We hear of car accidents and people injured. Friends, family and others diagnosed with cancer, people still can't find jobs, or suffer financial difficulties, hurricane, floods, earthquakes, the homeless, destruction, devastation and death. When these things happen, we are tempted to think God isn't paying attention. If all we had as tools to see was what is in our hearts, we might believe God is not paying attention. We call ourselves children of God, and wonder, "Why then is all this happening?"

Surprised, as we are, by the evil that comes, still we are surprised at this truth: You are forgiven. You are a child of God. God is paying attention. He paid attention to all of your sin, and paid the price for each one of them. That is the truth. That is the truth of our new reality Baptized into Christ.⁵ "Death don't live here anymore!" We are His, bought with a price; bought and cleansed by His Blood.

Now Satan is going to do everything He can to make you forget that. To make you think if everything's good on the outside you must be good on the inside, or if everything's bad on the outside you must be bad on the inside. It kind of makes sense, but it's not the truth. Christ has changed everything.

That's why St. Paul teaches us to put on the whole armor of God.⁶ The defensive armor of God's Holy Word, along with truth and forgiveness. These assaults of Satan, his lies and deceits, will not penetrate our hearts and faith. That's why Moses told us to make sure we teach our children, and our children's children.⁷ To make sure they know the truth. The truth of our sin and the truth of Jesus' forgiveness. The world is filled with other messages and other "truths" that may seem to make sense, but in the end they all lead us away from our Savior.⁸

St. Paul says, "Pray." Pray for those who are under attack. Pray for those who don't know the truth. Pray that the Word and Spirit and Blood of our Savior would cleanse all people and bring all to faith. Pray. Prayer is part of our offense against the enemy.

God's Holy Word proclaims:

5 **Romans 6:3-4** – Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

6 **Ephesians 6:10-20**

7 **Deuteronomy 4:9** – Take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children.

8 **Matthew 7:13-14** – Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.⁹

We pray that, we asked for that, because this is the Lord's work. It is why we come back here every week: to pray for and receive His forgiveness. We go to Him every day to pray for and receive His forgiveness. That is what He does: Forgiving and cleansing, restoring and renewing. That Baptized into Christ, what is in Christ may show itself outside on us.

Cleanse me and create in me a clean heart, O God, but also renew a right spirit within me. A right spirit. That believes right, that thinks right, that desires right, that speaks right and acts right, in faith toward God and love toward one another. Only He can do that, and He does. He promised. Not that we'll live perfect this side of Heaven's gates, you know that will never happen, but that we will, in faith, always turn to Him in every need, trusting in His Word, His love and His forgiveness, no matter what things look like, no matter how we feel.

When misfortune and trouble come, when the outside looks terrible, when we're under the assault of the evil one, when doubts arise, and even when faced with death, we confess God's Word; we confess God's Truth; we confess:

God's own child, I gladly say it:
I am baptized into Christ.

Sin disturb my soul no longer:
I am baptized into Christ.

Satan, hear this proclamation:
I am baptized into Christ.

Death, you cannot end my gladness:
I am baptized into Christ.

I am baptized into Christ.
I'm a child of paradise!

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

9 Psalm 51

