

**THE REAL JESUS**  
**A Series on the Book of Mark**  
**“A Cleansing of the Heart”**  
**Mark 7:1-23**  
**New City Church of LA**  
**January 11, 2008**  
**Speaker: Kevin Haah**

**I. Vision of New City**

Welcome to New City. We are a multi-ethnic, multi-socioeconomic come-as-you-are church. We believe that church is more than just coming together on Sundays. It's a community.

Talk about vision of community and why it is so important.

Share about honest and authentic community.

Share what we are going to do afterward through group link.

**II. Introduction**

We are in a series on the Book of Mark called the REAL JESUS.

Read Mark 7:1-23

This passage tells us: (1) that we all have a sense of uncleanness; (2) the wrong way to clean: outside in approach; and (3) the right way to a cleansing of the heart: inside out approach.

**III. First, we all have a sense of uncleanness.**

This is a passage about cleanliness. Jesus and the Pharisees disagree about the source of uncleanness and how to make oneself clean, but they don't disagree about the fact that that we are all unclean. They all agree that we are unfit for the presence of God. And deep in our hearts, we have this sense that we are not right.

If you read Shakespeare's Macbeth, there is a scene in which Lady Macbeth is trying to repeatedly wash her hands. She thinks there is still blood, but she can't wash it off: she says: "Out damn spots. Out, I say."

I know many of you live with this sense of guilt. If you get beyond the denials, you can't help but to admit that you've done some messy things. You've messed up

some people. Your addiction drove you to things you deeply regret now. You didn't do what you should have done in your last relationship. You weren't the father or mother or son or daughter you should have been. You were selfish and didn't think about what your behavior was going to do to you friends and relatives.

I've talked to many of you. You live in absolute agony of knowing that you've done something you should not have done and you're like Lady Macbeth, trying to wash yourself: out damn spots.

But some of you have a problem with the whole idea that we are unclean. You say: We live in a relativistic world. Who is to say what is right and wrong? We all have to decide that for ourselves. We believe in human rights and dignity of the human individuals. We believe that the human beings are basically good and this idea that human beings are unclean is unhealthy and bad for our self-esteem.

I think this was the prevailing worldview among philosophers before World War II. But this view was shattered by WWII and the holocaust. How can good people systematically kill so many people?

CEM Joad, who was a British atheist and socialist, wrote this right before his death, 1952 in a book called, *Recovery of Belief*, in which he explained why he came back to belief in God: "It was because we rejected the doctrine of original sin that we on the left were always being disillusioned. Both the behavior of the people and the leaders were inexplicable to us because we didn't believe in sin."

Another philosopher, Lord David Cecil put it this way, "The philosophy of progress has led us to believe that the savage and the primitive was behind us but it turns out it was within us."

When I was in college, I took a series of classes called European Intellectual History. At the end of the class, I walked away from my relationship with God because I thought it didn't make any sense. One of the biggest questions I had was about right and wrong. I became a moral relativist. Who is to say what is absolutely right or wrong? And if there is no absolute right or wrong, there is no sin; and if there is no sin, Jesus died for nothing and Christianity is not necessary. That was my struggle. But, the problem was that after I walked away, even as I was doing stuff without regard to my Christian

standards, I could not get rid of this sense that something is wrong with me. I had the deep profound inescapable sense that something is wrong with me.

We have this sense that we are not acceptable and we better try our best to prove that we are worthy and lovable. You know deep in your heart that you are somehow unclean. We call it different things: some call it psychological complex—it's my parents who didn't love me enough. We blame different things for that feeling but we all have that sense that we are unclean.

#### **IV. Secondly, We are All Trying to Clean Ourselves From the Outside In.**

We are all trying to clean ourselves from the outside. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were trying to clean themselves by observing the law and the tradition of the elders. They were trying to keep a certain moral standard, they were trying to keep distance from the kind of people they thought were impure, they were really serious about it. But, Jesus said it would never work. He said that no matter how hard you try to clean yourself by physically cleaning yourself or by controlling what you eat, it's not going to clean you because the impurity is in your *heart*. It is at the center of your being. Something is wrong with your heart. That's why from your heart comes: all kind of filth—evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. You need a solution that's going to deal with the heart. You need an inside job. Your cleansing has to be from the inside out.

Jesus is saying trying to clean yourself from the outside doesn't work. Have you tried to get rid of evil thoughts? Have you tried to get rid of lust from yourself? Have you tried to get rid of greed? Have you tried not to be envious of the guy who drives around in a latest sports car? Have you tried to get rid of anger? Have you tried to clean yourself just trying really hard?

The problem is in your heart. Your heart is the source of all uncleanness. That's the source of the problem. No matter how much you clean up the oil leak from your car, unless you fix the crack that causing the leak, you're not going to clean it up. You have to get to the heart!

But, we are constantly turning to outside in solution to the problem of the uncleanness of our heart.

We try it with religion.

All of the world religions and still many Christians are working outside in. Religion says: if I do all these things, if I stay away from bad people, if I stop doing drugs, if I give money to church, if I love my family, if I if I do this, and God will come in and bless me and take away my sense of uncleanness. Jesus says this model does not work. It does not change the heart. It makes you more anxious. When something wrong happens in your life, you have doubt. Maybe I am not good enough. It does not change the heart. It does not get rid of self-absorption. When things go well in your life, then you are likely to become arrogant and have a holier than thou attitude. It does not change the heart, the source of all uncleanness.

Some of us are trying to get that sense of cleanness, value and worth by making ourselves physically attractive. This is so easy to fall into. Grace and I try really hard not to emphasize physical beauty in an era where little girls grow up with princess and Barbie movies, dolls and other paraphernalia. Then, they grow up with Hannah Montana, Brittany Spears. Be pretty. Be skinny. There is a form of cleanness. Flawless skin without blemish. But, this doesn't change the heart either.

For many of us, trying to look good is just a means to another end—a relationship with someone special. We crave for someone who would come into our lives and tell us we are okay, that he or she loves us for who we are. But at the same time, we have a deep fear that they will not accept us if they really knew us. This form of trying to clean ourselves through someone else is another attempt to clean ourselves from outside in and does not work--people may or may not accept you for who you are. They may not have the patience or the grace to cover over your uncleanness.

For some of us, we try to do it through success and significance. This is something I constantly have to preach to myself about. Only if I get that degree, that job, make that business work, build that mega-popular church, then I can get rid of that sense of uncleanness, unworthiness. This is also an outside-in approach and it doesn't work.

What works?

**V. Jesus. Jesus is the only way to clean our hearts. It's the Inside Out Approach. That's my third point.**

Mark makes an interesting comment on the second part of verse 19: “(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean).” Now, there were traditional of the elders which were very probamatic and Jesus attacked those rules. But, there were also laws in the Torah (in Leviticus) which made eating certain kind of food unclean. These were the ceremonial laws of the Old Testaments. Jesus is NOT saying that those laws are no good—he just talked about how important the commandments of God were and how they were undermining the commandments of God through traditions of men.

He is instead **declaring, pronouncing** that the laws have been fulfilled. How did the laws having to do with cleanliness get fulfilled? It was not fulfilled because everyone got it and the laws were not needed anymore.

It was fulfilled, we became clean, because God decided to come, the Great I AM decided to come down to us, and rescue us from the mess, the dirtiness, the uncleanness of our lives. He decided to come and purify us.

The only way for us to be rescued by God is not by trying really hard to be a better person, a more beautiful person, a more worthy person; it’s not by stopping all the bad stuff that you do; it’s not by changing your behavior; it’s not by getting more religious. It *is* by coming back to God and telling Him that you are helplessly unclean, messed up, or lost. That you are indeed a sinner in need of savior. That you have nothing to offer Him but a jacked up life. . And asking him to clean your heart. Asking for His mercy and grace.

And Jesus, took our uncleanness and gave us his cleanness. He took our sins and gave us his righteousness. He took our sins and paid the price of death, which is a separation from God. And this is the price that Jesus paid on the cross. Jesus suffered on the cross and died an excruciatingly painful death, but at the spiritual level, Jesus was separated from the community of the Triune God because He decided to take up our sins upon Himself. That’s why Jesus cried out on the cross right before He died, “my God, my God, why have forsaken me?” It is the cry of the holy God who paid the penalty for our sins, our impurity, our uncleanness, so that we can be clean and have a relationship with God.

When we come to the realization of his amazing love for us, his amazing work to clean us of our uncleanness, our filth, that he has washed them away by the blood shed by

Jesus on the cross, it not only cleans our heart, but it starts to change our lives. We are moved by his grace, we want to change our lives, we want to respond to him with love, we want to ... we want to. It is a change from the inside out.