Sunday School Lesson
Mark 7: Ceremonial & Real Defilement (June 7, 2026)

Introduction

Remember that Mark is accepted as the first Gospel written, and that it was written to the Romans to explain who Jesus is.

Old Testament perspective - **Defilement**: The state of being made unclean or impure, often in a spiritual or moral sense. No defiled person could enter the sanctuary of the Lord (Numbers 19:13, 20).

- sinful actions, disobedience to God's laws
    - Idolatry (Jeremiah 32:34)
    - Sexual sin (**1 Corinthians 5:11**, Matthew 15:18-20)
        - (Sexual sin in all its forms is a metaphor used regularly throughout Scripture to symbolize God's broken relationship with His people. For example, wayward Israel was often compared to an adulterous wife or promiscuous daughter (Ezekiel 16:32; 23:30; James 4:4))
    - Desecration of God's temple (Ezekiel 23:39; 44:7; Malachi 2:11).

- contact with unclean things
    - Dead carcasses (Leviticus 11:24-28; Numbers 19:11-13)
    - Swarming creatures (Leviticus 11:43)
    - Another unclean person (Numbers 19:22)

Jesus' Itinerary

- Jesus just fed the 5,000, probably on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- Disciples by boat to Bethsaida
- In the dark, Jesus walked on the water to Bethsaida
- Upon arrival, crowds gathered for healing.
- Time to eat: Pharisees ("the truth squad") and scribes from Jerusalem were watching. Read **Mark 7:5**
- Originally, priests were to wash hands & feet before entering the Tabernacle (Exodus 30:19-20), because clean hands & feet represented a clean heart.
- This rite evolved into an intricately defined requirement for ALL people.

- Now the popular focus was on the act and not the spiritual significance.
- Jesus' response is from Isaiah 29:13. Read **Mark 7:6-7**

- Jesus presses the hypocrisy charge further with the term, Corbăn (given to God) vs. "honor your father and mother." "And many such things you do." – Mark 7:13

Jesus' Interpretation of Defilement

Jesus makes a radical shift from OT thinking: Defilement is NOT from anything outside the person; it is internal.

The stomach is a purifying, pass-through organ and not absolutely necessary; the heart is indispensable and thought to be the center of all motivations and impulses.

Jesus' Travels Outside of Israel

- Only once did Jesus leave Israel. He went north west to Tyre ("Rock City" – fortified island) & Sidon ("Mother City") on the Mediterranean Coast (perhaps for "peace & quiet"; perhaps to let Pharisees cool down).
- Jesus tried, but failed to be unnoticed.
- Greek woman (Syrophoenician – NOT Jewish) with demon-possessed daughter
- Jesus refused to help, pointing out that He was to serve the Jews first, but the woman persisted.
- Jesus was probably amused by the woman's creative response. How could he not help the woman?
- God's Grace is not meant for one nation alone.

Healing a Deaf-Mute

- Jesus left Tyre, went through Sidon, to the Decapolis region on the western shore of Sea of Galilee.
- Deaf-mute was brought to Him. His friends did not ask for healing, only a blessing. Read **Mark 7:33-36**.
- Man suffered social stigma for his condition.
- This healing was private, a courtesy – away from the crowd. And, it was very personal. God's healing is not mechanical; it is intimate and compassionate.
- This symbolizes a spiritual opening.

- Again, Jesus doesn't want a lot of publicity.

  [37] And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak." – Mark 7:37

Cleansing:

Personal: cleansing by confessing our sins to God (**1 John 1:9**)

Summary:

Are we deaf-mutes? Deaf to God's voice or mute in sharing our faith?

Only the blood of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to cleanse our hearts and make us fit to commune with God (1 John 1:7).

The successful Christian is one who walks in the Spirit so that defilement no longer defines him (1 John 3:6–10; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Galatians 5:16, 19–21).

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