

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 7:14-23

Year B - Proper 17, Text: Mark 7:14-23

Year B - Proper 17, Text: Mark 7:1-8, 14, 15, 21-23

Editor's Note: This commentary was made by using part of Wendt's commentary on Proper 17 from the RCL (Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23). The LSB/Sola lectionary splits this pericope into two parts: Proper 16 (Mark 7:1-13) and Proper 17 (Mark 7:14-23).

After pointing out the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees in Mark 7:1–23, Jesus further defines the true moral intent of the divine law.

In Verses 14–15, He sets aside the superficial interpretation of the law itself in respect to clean and unclean food, with a deeper understanding of what makes a person clean or unclean. In doing so, opens the way for unity between Jew and Gentile in the kingdom of God as He Himself ministers in Gentile territory (Mark 5:1–20; 7:24–30, 31–37; 8:1–10).

Verses 7:14–15: While being negligent about the greater call to love one's neighbor, the scribes and Pharisees were very scrupulous about Jewish dietary restrictions. Jesus points out that what enters a person is of no great consequence; it enters the stomach and passes through the body. What matters is what comes out of the heart via the mouth.

Verses 7:21–23: Jesus then lists the thoughts and actions that flow from the heart and mouth and truly defile. "Evil intentions" have to do with wicked designs and desires. Jesus lists 12 of them, which read like a catechetical list that resembles those found in Paul's writings (e.g., Galatians 5:19–21).

Jesus' overall message in this section of Mark is that the Pharisees and scribes had made the outward observance of the Law all important, with the result that ceremonial cleanness had replaced purity of heart, and religious rituals had taken priority over right relationships.

Because they focused on appearances rather than attitudes, pretense was never far away. Their lip service to God was a cover for hearts that dishonored Him. Still

today (and sad to say), we, like the scribes and Pharisees of old, often blame external things for our failings — for our spiritual and moral uncleanness. However, the heart of the issue usually has to do with our inner life. It is there that Jesus wants to rule!

We might say that the scribes and Pharisees established "legal checkpoints" in relation to entry into Jewish synagogues and communities. And do not some churches still today operate checkpoints in relation to whom they accept into the fellowship? "You are not welcome here! You have the wrong skin color! You belong to the wrong political party! You had a child out of wedlock!"

However, Jesus touched lepers and those with physical blemishes — those affected with things that religious leaders said excluded them from membership in God's people (Mark 1:40–45). For example, He permitted a Jewish woman who had been experiencing non-stop menstrual bleeding for 12 years (and was therefore seen as an outcast in both her family circle and village community) to touch Him — and addressed her as daughter (Mark 5:25–34). He showed mercy to a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21–28) and fed 4,000 Gentile men with bread and fish (Mark 8:1–10).

There should never be a checkpoint at a church entrance, only a welcome point. We do not invite people to church only *after* they have made themselves clean enough to attend. Rather, we invite them into our Christian family so that they might learn about the forgiveness that God has been offering to them throughout life!

God's goal has to do with brining about a radical transformation of the totality of life. His invitation is, "Believe in My forgiving, saving, servant Son — and follow Him full-time!"

