



Sermon Overview

The three incidents in Mark 7:24-8:10 have a direct connection to the teaching of Jesus about the nature of sin in Mark 7:1-23. The Mosaic law required that worshippers be “ritually clean,” physically healthy, have no contact with dead animals or people, abstain from a list of prohibited foods, and so on. The purpose of these rules was to act as a “visual aid” to show us that we needed to be holy before God. Disease, decay, and dirt symbolize sin. The religious leaders, however, saw ritual purity not as symbolizing holiness, but as *constituting* holiness. As a result, they added even more rules and regulations, the “tradition of the elders,” on top of the Biblical laws. They believed that you could make yourself acceptable to God by scrupulously staying separate from profane and unclean people, places, and practices. Jesus says that they completely missed the point of the Old Testament regulations. Sin is first of all internal, a matter of the heart. Sin can’t be dealt with by external washing, but only through internal spiritual intervention.

This is the only recorded time that Jesus ever left the territory of Israel. He was going out into “unclean” Gentile turf. The most “religiously-correct” did not associate with Gentiles at all. Even if Jesus had no intention to do any public ministry, his willingness to travel into pagan lands is important. Coming after Jesus’ dispute in Mark 7:1-23, this shows his disregard for the legalism and nationalism of the religious leaders of His day.

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Getting Started

1. Think through and discuss times when you have felt like your sin has put you too far from the grace of God. Or, have there been times when you’ve assumed that God is pleased with you because of what you do or don’t do.

Starting with God

2. Consider verses 24-26. Think of all the ways in which Mark is pointing out what an “unclean” situation Jesus now involves himself.

3. In verses 26-27, Jesus' conversation begins, with what appears to be, a very curt and rude interaction. What is Jesus trying to communicate by His apparent refusal to help this woman and essentially classifying her as a household pet?

4. In verses 28-30, how does the woman react? What does this teach us about how to meet Christ by faith?

5. Reread verses 31-37. What is unique about the healing here in comparison with the past healings? Why does Jesus do these things? Why do you think Mark continues to give accounts of Jesus' healings?

6. The feeding for the 4,000 people in a Gentile region shows Jesus' willingness to bridge any geographical, cultural or racial divide. Reread Mark 8:8. What does this resolution to the story tell us?

Living God's Word

7. Look back over these three episodes. What practical lessons are to be learned?

Prayer

*Father God,
Thank you for your abundant grace. Please make your redemption alive and real in me that I may
find my joy and fulfillment in you.
Amen.*