

**Mark 7:14-23 (NIV)**

<sup>14</sup>Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.

<sup>15</sup>Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him.

Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’”

<sup>16</sup> “[NKJV] If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”

<sup>17</sup>After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

<sup>18</sup>“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'?”

<sup>19</sup>For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)

<sup>20</sup>He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.’”

<sup>21</sup>For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

<sup>22</sup>greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

<sup>23</sup>All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.’”

41-07-01-The Target of Kingdom Change  
Kingdom, righteousness, surrender, legalism,  
Mark 7:14-23

The King’s reign *inside* produces Kingdom living on the *outside*.

**INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture Reading)**

–Mark 7 begins with the *Kingdom* clashing with *religion*. The Pharisees criticized Jesus for His disciples eating with ritually “unclean” hands. He rebukes *them* for making man’s rules divine, sometimes even breaking God’s law by them– v.13, “Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition.”

–Then begins v.14, “Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.” He states a *Kingdom principle*, to expose His critics’ error, and then v.16 [NKJV], “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” [=“If **open** to **obey**, then **listen**!”] Outward legalisms don’t help but hinder seeking “first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Only those *willing to obey* would learn that **HOM.idea**. So, He gave them...

**I. A Principle to Change Their Minds– v.14b-15**, “Listen to me, everyone, and *understand* this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’”

A. *False understanding began* when taking *forbidden fruit* gave us a moral knowledge independent from God. (*Religion began* by Satan telling Adam & Eve, “*You two are naked!*” and they, *on their own*, tried to fix an *internal sin problem* with *external fig leaves*.)

1. [Textiles were our first *external rite* to make things *right*. But it didn’t work! God sacrificed innocent animals to *cover* them up [kaphar=atone, cover over] with skins. This foreshadowed Christ’s ultimate Sacrifice to take sins away.]
2. [God later restricted Israel’s diet to show their distinction from the unholy nations around them. But their *focus on food* turned into a *false religious trust* that their diet made them *holy*, instead of the presence of God among them.]

B. Religiosity trades an *internal walk with God* for *external rules* that can never produce holiness– Col 2:21-23, “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These are all... based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

**TRANS: The King’s reign *inside* produces Kingdom living on the *outside*.** Did the crowd get that? Did the disciples even get it? Probably

not, because in v.17, *After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. So, Jesus clarified how...*

**II. This Principle Eliminated False Targets— v.18-19a,** *“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart....”*

A. He wanted them, and us, to know that “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” are as useless for bringing us holiness as fig-leaf outfits.

1. The point is, *they miss the point! Outwardly religious do’s and don’ts don’t do the job*—they miss God’s target for holiness.
2. [I used to hear, *“Don’t grow a beard! Avoid rock music! No card games, no dances, no alcohol!” “Girls, no short-shorts or dresses above the knee! And, guys, don’t ever see girls naked, or you’ll lust.”* That had “an appearance of wisdom,” but as a male RN working with female patients, I discovered it to be a *religiously wise lie. Why was it a lie?* Because it’s the **wrong target!**]

B. We’re told to “worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!” What is *holy beauty*? Peter’s words defining true modesty tell us in 1 Pet 3:3-4 (ESV), “Do not let your adorning be **external**—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the **hidden person of the heart** with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. (The target is *the heart!*)

**TRANS:** The King’s reign *inside* produces Kingdom living on the *outside*. [As a male L&D nurse, I had to trade a religious don’t for a holy do when it came to seeing nudity.] Jesus said in Mat 5:38 “anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her **in his heart**.” The problem isn’t *eye-trouble* but *heart-trouble*. The King *inside* teaches us how to see all people, naked or clothed, *with His eyes*. It’s not what enters the eye, ear or mouth that defiles— v.20, [Jesus] *went on:* “*What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’*” It’s crucial we get this, so *He emphasized...*

**III. What This Principle Targets for Change— v.21-23,** *“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come **evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly**. All these **evils** come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”*

- A. *External religious legalisms* are sinful [sin= “missing the mark”]. (An *outward focus aims at false targets* and causes many people to miss the true holy *heart-change* God wants to bring about.)
- B. As I read this list again, visualize how our *media* makes headlines

of these Satan-led, Satan-fed *evils*...

1. The *news* reports them, but never offering solutions to end them.
2. But then the King came! And *why* did He come?— 1 John 3:8b, The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy the devil’s work.**)

### **CONCLUSION:**

—Each of these *evils* are dispelled by letting *Jesus indwell and rule the heart*. Mark’s Gospel, with its Kingdom emphasis, shows a Kingdom principle: **The King’s reign *inside* produces Kingdom living on the *outside***. We can get distracted from that principle. *Satan tempts us to judge others by outward appearances, or we return to our old trust in the holiness of outward practices*. *If that happens*, let’s **remember** that *the Kingdom of God* is where *the King reigns*, and then **re-submit ourselves** to the clear definition in Rom 14:17, For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.