

our hearts each day to YOU, who first loved us! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Christ and Culture

Give thanks to God for those cultures which reflect a true Christian heritage. Pray that these will not be overcome by the strong pressures of secularism within the world. Play also that through revival, the Gospel will powerfully change cultures even in today's scientific world, so that people might come to accept that God is indeed to be found within the world.

Meditation

The routine of our lives continues day by day,
But nothing is routine to Almighty God.
He waits at the bedside of those who are dying;
And He is present at the miracle of birth.
He stands by the shy child in the playground;
And He challenges the arrogant bully in his heart.
He applauds those who have found success
And He stands by those who think they have failed.
He watches the heart of a caring mother;
And He moves the heart of a father to love.
He reveals Himself in the glories of creation
And He opens up nature to the discipline of science.
There is no part of life in which He is not involved,
But it is for us to grasp the meaning of His presence

Bible Study - Mark 7:14-23

¹⁴ Then He called the crowd to Him again and said to them, 'Listen to what I say, you, and understand ¹⁵ that there is nothing outside of a person which by going inside of him will make him "unclean". However, it is what comes out of a person which makes him "unclean"! ¹⁶ (Let anyone with ears to hear, listen!) When he arrived home and away from the crowds, His disciples asked Him about the parable. ¹⁸ He said to them, 'Why are you so senseless? Don't you understand that whatever goes into a person from the outside has no power to make him "unclean", ¹⁹ because it does not go into the heart but the stomach, and is passed out into the sewer (in this way, Jesus declared all foods 'clean'). ²⁰ He continued, 'What comes out of a person make him 'unclean', ²¹ for evil thoughts come from within a person; sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, vice, jealousy, blasphemy, arrogance and foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and they make a person 'unclean'.

those who heard Him to pay attention and understand what was before him if what He said was of truly great importance. Then finally, something which He did nowhere else in His ministry, which was to be seen and deeds as an example of the true 'uncleanness' of the human race. It could have come straight from a letter of St Paul rather than the Gospels. It tells us that this passage is indeed very important. In these verses, Jesus had brushed aside the Pharisaic people had to obey countless traditional 'rules' before they could the worship of their God (7:1-8). In addition, Jesus exposed how c Jerusalem were from the real lives of those they were supposed this, our passage today is indeed the climax of Jesus' challenge i who were watching and listening to what He said (see 7:1), at least the crowds (7:14-16). They heard Him say that it was what people consequently did that could separate them from God (make the observance of rituals, even ones from Scripture (as were all the r This is something that Christians today are quite used to, for the i preached that although Scripture tells us what sin is and we must n through Jesus Christ, and those who have faith in Him will be sa sounded startling to people in Jesus' day to hear it said that the were not the basis of what was acceptable to God, when this had b Although what Jesus said sounds obvious to us now, in this p whole swathes of the Old Testament with a few words, and this ' bemused. We, too, are left wondering how we can properly honour Old Testament 'Laws' and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because Ma sections of the Old Testament. The clue, however, is in Jesus' 'heart' of a man or woman (7:21), for when all else is considered, relationship with God must be embedded in our 'hearts'.

Going Deeper

In order to explore all this further, we will have to be very careful passage contains interesting sections which appear to be the eq and there is repetition of a number of statements and themes. I way that Mark reported it, we will eventually find **What makes a person 'unclean'?** The Pharisees and scribes had initially challenged Jesus about the disciples. From their point of view, if the laws of ritual clea Jews (see Mark's explanation of this is 7:3), then Judaism itself v not tolerate such ignorance and malpractice. The whole of Jesus the chapter until our passage today was His way of saying 'nonsen

then Jesus was happy to leave them to one side as part of the record of Israel's past journey of faith, but not a detail of truth which had to be obeyed in the Kingdom of God. What Jesus was revealing about Himself and God within His ministry.

Uncleanness and Jesus' healing ministry

This is exemplified by what had happened in Jesus' own healing ministry in Mark's Gospel. Most (though not quite all) of the people Jesus had healed or delivered from demons had been ritually unclean. The leper was ritually unclean (1:40-45), 'Legion' was certainly one of the for apart from having demons, he lived amongst dead bodies in the tombs (6:49). The young girl with a haemorrhage was unclean because of her blood (5:24-34), and the young girl raised to life was unclean because she was dead (5:35-43)! Why did these healings relate to uncleanness? Why did many Jesus did and therefore come to be recorded in Mark's Gospel? Because for the Jews, because for Jesus, they illustrated how impossible it was for people in need to find help within Judaism, so He came to their help. The crowds who came for healing were not just people who helped us understand the meaning of the many others in a similar plight; they did not think of going to their local synagogue for the healing they could not go there because they were unclean! Religion based on laws of purity therefore, prevented people being healed! This was why Jesus did away with the ritual laws of purity in this passage so strongly about the irrelevance of laws of purity in this passage. People's lives were at stake!

We must also remember that Jesus' freedom to interpret the Old Testament makes it possible for Christians to practice their faith without circumcision, of cattle and goats when worshipping, and without ritual offerings of every kind. The Old Testament does reveal vital truths about the heart of God, but it also tells us about how we should live of ancient times worshipped the Lord before Jesus clarified things, embodied what was right about God, and died to save us. We should also remember that what we have seen in the Old Testament prophets said, speaking centuries after Jesus was here of my ministry as people have selfishly protector and centuries before Christ. We have already seen in Mark's Gospel (and as you will find throughout my notes on Matthew) that Jesus frequently quoted the prophets to interpret the Old Testament.

The text

There is a degree of urgency in the way Jesus called the crowd and said to them, 'nothing outside of a person which by going inside of him will make him "unclean" ... what comes out of a person makes him "unclean".' (7:15). Jesus began with a call for understanding; 'Listen ...' just as He did in the parable of the sower (4:3). This was important, and perhaps Jesus was attempting to show that the ritual rules of the Pharisees and a slavish interpretation of the Old Testament should not prevent people from receiving the healing mercy of God. Nevertheless, Jesus had a message to teach His own disciples, and it was they who came to Him asking for help to understand what was a mystery to them, but seems obvious to Jesus and to us who read this with him.

Jesus was undoubtedly sharp to the disciples in saying 'why are you so senseless? Why do you did not expect the highly literal and obvious interpretation of Jesus' words, precisely because this would mean that the entire system of religious obligations into which they had been born and raised was being swept away. If that were the case, it would be a disaster to your faith in God. They were not

Application

there is a constant danger amongst God's people from demons, but there are rules which we think will protect what we have created. The Christian church have formal statements of doctrine, but are sometimes regarded somewhat lightly. In our history of doctrines, agreements and rules, a church becomes ever more complex. My wife and I have been married, and we had to travel an amazing distance to find a church where we could finally get married, and then, only because of the help of a priest who helped us understand the meaning of the Christian Church should not be a 'free-for-all' of people. We agree that Jesus is their Saviour and will come to save the world. We agree that God is the Creator and is revealed both in His word and in His works. What is essential to our faith? You may spot one or two things in my brief list, but if you consider the doctrinal claims of most church

are we in danger of creating too many 'rules of cleanliness'? There are things that we follow Him and do His will with complete joy. In addition, you may agree, or at least consider, that churches are defined and operate, then we open ourselves to 'thoughts' which Jesus Himself identified as indications of a heart that is not right. Greed, selfishness, pride, jealousy, foolishness, greed etc.' Sadly, I believe in the work of my ministry as people have selfishly protector (and as you will find in the parables) that they belong, or attempted to claim to belong to the structures of the real 'Body of Christ'. Our churches today need to be purged of sin.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. In your study notes on this passage, would you consider that Jesus was trying to get us to be close to the Jew's rules of 'cleanliness'?

2. Although that we eat does not make us unclean before God, what should our faith take account of this?

3. What are the sins which are common in the life of the church today?

Discipleship

Jesus said to them, 'Why do you make rules for yourselves by which you determine what is permissible to eat and the church. Think of the phrase 'I will not be defiled by anything that enters from outside and fill in the blank space as many times as you wish.' ...