

Main Idea: Jesus confronts two misunderstandings in Mark 7:14-23. If we want to be right with God, we must take heed to His words and get to the *heart of the problem*, which is *the problem of the heart*.

- I. Jesus confronts the misunderstanding of spirituality (14-15).
 - A. Religion takes an outside-in approach.
 1. If we do the right things, we’ll be right with God.
 2. If we don’t do the right things, we’ll defile ourselves.
 - B. Jesus takes an inside-out approach.
 1. Our problem isn’t external.
 2. Our problem originates within us.
- II. Jesus confronts the misunderstanding of sin (17-23).
 - A. We must recognize the source of sin (17-19).
 1. It doesn’t come from the outside.
 2. It doesn’t have to do with diet.
 - B. We must recognize the severity of sin (20-23).
 1. Sin begins in the heart.
 2. Sin develops in the mind.
 3. Sin shows up in our actions.
 4. Sin results in defilement.
 - C. We must recognize the solution for sin.
 1. I have a corrupt heart.
 2. I need the cross.

Take Inventory: Let’s ask ourselves these important questions...

1. Am I right with God?
2. Why do I think I am right with God?

What is sin, and how does a person get rid of it? These are vital questions, and every generation, every *person*, must face them.

It was 505 years ago, on October 31, 1517, that Martin Luther faced them. He nailed ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. Why? To protest the Roman Catholic practice of the sale of indulgences, which said that if you gave money to certain charities, you would receive a piece of paper (an indulgence) that certified your soul would enter heaven more quickly and reduce your time in purgatory.

Is that true? Can you get rid of sin by doing good works? Martin Luther, himself a Roman Catholic monk, objected. In fact, he wrote 95 objections (theses) and posted them on the church door. Here’s a sampling:²

Thesis 3: There is no inward repentance which does not outwardly work divers mortifications of the flesh.

Thesis 6: The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring that it has been remitted by God and by assenting to God’s remission.

Thesis 21: Those preachers of indulgences are in error, who say that by the pope’s indulgences a man is freed from every penalty, and saved.

Thesis 28: It is certain that when the penny jingles into the money-box, gain and avarice can be increased, but the result of the intercession of the Church is in the power of God alone.

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

² Luther, M. (1996). [*Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the power and efficacy of indulgences: October 31, 1517*](#) (electronic ed.). Logos Bible Software.

Thesis 37: Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all the blessings of Christ and the Church; and this is granted him by God, even without letters of pardon.

Thesis 86: Why does not the pope, whose wealth is to-day greater than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?

Those were Luther's protests, at least some of them. And by his actions, he launched what we now call the Protestant Reformation. Can you fix your sin problem by doing something good? No, said Luther, in protest of an entire religious system that said you could.

So what is insufficient about good works? Why can our good deeds *not* solve the problem of sin? Jesus Himself will answer this question for us this morning as we return to our journey through the Gospel of Mark. As we'll see, Jesus makes it perfectly clear that *the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.*

Scripture Reading: Mark 7:14-23

Religion produces bondage. Christianity sets people free.

Several years ago I read the following story by ABWE missionaries, Antonio and Diana Navarrete, who were serving in Mexico City:

"I watched a very old and feeble woman slowly enter the cathedral. She fell to her knees in the entrance and crawled toward the last bench. I don't believe she stayed there because of not being able to physically continue, but rather because she somehow felt unworthy to go closer to the statue of the virgin before her. I invaded her private worship as I spied on her with my telephoto lens. She poured out her heart and cried and repeated the prayers written on the seven cards she pulled out of her bag. Then she stood, took a deep breath, went forward and placed a kiss on the virgin's foot, turned toward the door and slowly made her way out. I lost sight of her and began to look for my family. As I stood in the courtyard with them, something compelled me to look back at the cathedral. She was standing there alone in the huge doorway. My gaze turned to where she was looking. A wedding party was heading toward the entrance. They were laughing and hugging each other. They almost knocked her over as they began to pass. She looked so sad. And even though her mouth would say "I am fine. I am strong and I have my religion and the virgin." Her eyes said, "Someone please tell [me that] all the years of coming here and confessing and reciting prayers will be worth it and will earn me something." I decided to approach her but was not able to as more members of the wedding procession came between us. When the path was clear she was gone."

What is sin, and how does a person get rid of it? Sin is what separates from God. Okay, that's clear. So how do we solve the sin problem? Can religious activity solve the problem of sin? Can living a good life? Can we do *anything* to solve our sin problem, and thereby know that we will go to heaven when we die?

Thankfully, God Himself sent His own into the world, not only to tell us the answer, but to *become* the answer to this vital question. This is such an important passage. In Mark 7:14-23, Jesus confronts two very common misunderstandings that will keep people out of heaven. If we want to be right with God, we must take heed to His words and get to the *heart of the problem*, which is *the problem of the heart.*

I. Jesus confronts the misunderstanding of spirituality (14-15).

What does a truly “spiritual” person look like? How is spirituality attained? The woman in Mexico City equated spirituality with religious activity. Going to a cathedral, reading prayer cards, kissing a statue. To be *spiritual* you must do those things.

For the Muslim spirituality requires strict adherence to the teachings of the Koran. And so he bows towards Mecca and says his prayers at set times each day, he fasts during Ramadan, and so on. You must do these things and others if you want to be spiritual.

The Hindu has his approach. So does the Buddhist. So does the Mormon. So do many Baptists for that matter, who sadly are depending on their list of achievements.

But when it comes to spirituality, true biblical Christianity is different in a very fundamental way. How so? Let’s listen to Jesus...

Notice verses 14-15, “And he called the people to him again and said to them, ‘Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.’”³

Remember when Jesus said those words. The Pharisees and teachers of the law had just come to Him from Jerusalem (1). They’d come to trap Him, having already decided to kill Him (3:6). They criticized Him in verse 5, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with ‘unclean’ hands?” In other words, your disciples aren’t spiritual because they don’t obey our Jewish traditions.

Last time we commented that the Jews had two sources of authority. One was the Scriptures. The other was the tradition of the elders. The first came from God and the other came from man. The traditions were originally supposed to help people obey the Scriptures, but over the years the traditions began to distract people from the Scriptures.

Jesus didn’t mince words in His response to the Pharisees. “You are hypocrites,” He told them (6). “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men (8).” “You nullify the word of God by your tradition (13).” “You do many things like that (13b).”

You could cut the air with a knife at this point. Matthew says that Jesus “offended” the Pharisees (15:12). You can see why. What they called white He called black. There was no middle ground, and He wasn’t about to pretend there was. Mere religion and biblical Christianity do not mix.

Yet Jesus wasn’t done. Mark says that having rebuked the Pharisees, Jesus “called the people to him again and said to them.”

“Hear me, *all of you*,” He proclaimed. It’s one thing to differ over second tier issues, and when that happens there should be charity. But this was a bedrock, foundational matter. How does a person get right with God and stay right with God? That’s the issue. It’s about *spirituality*.

In verse 15 Jesus shares a little parable with the crowd that contrasts two very different approaches to being spiritual. Religion’s approach. And His approach.

A. Religion takes an outside-in approach. Consider Jesus’ word picture (NIV), “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.’”

Here was the Pharisees’ approach. It’s the approach of every form of mere religion. Simply stated, it goes like this.

³ Since it’s not in the oldest manuscripts, there is no verse 16 in the ESV and NIV. In the AV, “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

1. *If we do the right things, we'll be right with God. Conversely...*
2. *If we don't do the right things, we'll defile ourselves.* It's an *outside-in* approach to spirituality. Do what's right and you'll have a clean heart. Don't do what's right and you'll have an unclean heart. Go to cathedral, read a prayer card, kiss a statue, and you'll leave with a clean heart (of course, you'll need to keep coming back). Pray to Mecca, observe Ramadan, and you'll have a clean heart, at least for today.

But let's not fail to look in the mirror. How do we often view spirituality in our circles? Go to church, give your tithes to God, have a daily Bible reading, work in the nursery, *do these things* and you'll be spiritual.

You say, "But shouldn't we go to church, give to God, spend time in His Word daily, and serve in church ministries?" Yes, but the question is *why?* Do we do those things to make ourselves spiritual? Religion says yes, with its *outside-in* approach. Not Jesus.

B. Jesus takes an inside-out approach. Hear Him. In the NIV, "Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him [the direction isn't outside-in]. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean' [the order is inside out]."

The inside-out approach recognizes two realities ignored by the outside-in approach.

1. *Our problem isn't external.* It's not outside of us.
2. *Our problem originates within us.*

It's a simple illustration but it makes the point. Take a pig, any ordinary pig will do. Bring him into your house.

"Do *what?*" you ask. "But he's dirty!"

Okay, then clean him up. Get the soap and scrub-brush and give him a bath, then let him come inside and live with you. After all, he's clean now, isn't he?

You say, "Maybe now, but he won't stay clean."

Why not? It's because his nature hasn't changed. He still loves the mud. You can't change his nature by giving him a bath, or a thousand baths. You can't change the nature of a creature by working outside-in.

A teen does drugs and messes up his life. What does he need? Some say he needs education. Teach him how to clean up his life. Others say he needs a new environment. Show him how to clean up his life. But that misses the mark. His problem is much deeper. His problem is that he doesn't *want* a clean life, a life devoted to pleasing God. Instead, he wants a life full of things that please him. And even if we succeed in getting him off drugs, he's still controlled by a love of himself that will in time manifest itself in other sinful ways. His problem isn't merely external, that he puts drugs into his body. It's internal, that he has a heart that actually wants to put drugs into his body.

Religion seeks to clean up the outside, foolishly thinking that if you do that, you'll eventually reach the inside and create a spiritual person. But religion fails every time.

On the contrary, Jesus does what no religion can do because Jesus takes a fundamentally different approach, an *inside-out* approach, that addresses the real problem. "It is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean," said Jesus.

Do you agree with Jesus? Many don't, and I mean *many*.

Almost one hundred years ago J. D. Jones wrote this observation, "I wonder whether even in Christian countries there are not a great many people who are far more troubled about dirty hands than they are about a dirty soul!"⁴

⁴ J. D. Jones, p. 216.

The truth is, we tend to settle for externals. All of us do. Educators. Coaches. Pastors. We stress the need for correct behavior, because that's what we see. But if we're not careful, we end up missing the point that this behavior must come from a clean heart. If it doesn't, what we're producing is little more than a Pharisee.

Parents, grandparents, this is critical for us. How we view spirituality will affect how we approach our task of rearing these little ones the Lord has entrusted to us. Show me what a parent does with his or her children and I'll show you how that parent views spirituality, whether it's outside-in, or inside-out.

In his excellent book, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, Tedd Tripp offers this premise, "Behavior is heart driven, therefore, correction, discipline and training—all parenting—must be addressed to the heart. The fundamental task of parenting is shepherding the hearts of your children."⁵

Is that how you approach parenting, the inside-out approach? Many don't.

In his classic book, *Age of Opportunity*, Paul Tripp observes, "Most of the parents I have worked with have this goal: to get their children to do what is right. Their goal is to control, direct, or guide the behavior of their children. To them, this is the heart of Christian parenting. So John, who has gotten poor grades, is forbidden to watch television until his grades are better, and Sue, who didn't return her sister's blouse after she borrowed it without asking, is told that she cannot borrow anyone's clothes for six weeks. Solutions? Yes, outwardly, but no change of heart."⁶

Then Paul Tripp adds, "We need to ask why Sue thinks it is her right to take the possessions of others without permission and with no sense of obligation to return them. What is it about the way she thinks about herself and others that makes this behavior acceptable to her conscience? It is not enough to place behavioral boundaries around her. Our goal is to be used of God to expose and nurture the hearts of our children so that they want to behave in ways that please the Lord."⁷

In other words, we need to get to the heart of the problem. What are our children thinking and wanting that produces the kinds of behavior we're seeing. In Tripp's illustration, John is getting bad grades, but why? "Why is John, a bright teenager, getting such poor grades? We need to realize that his grades are a window into the thoughts and motives of his heart. We need to consider what desires of heart lead him to use the time he needs for study on things of much less importance. Heart response and heart change are our focus because we know that what controls the heart will control the life."⁸

And what's true of children and teens is true of adults too. We do what we do because of what we're thinking and wanting in our hearts. We function *inside-out*.

Herein lies the trouble with mere religion. It generates pride because it focuses on human accomplishment, but it can't change people, not where the true problem lies. It rearranges the furniture in a person's life, but fails to repair the cracked foundation.

Religion is like walking up on a down escalator. You keep walking and walking and walking but get nowhere. You keep the rules and regulations, thinking they will take you up. But they don't. And in the quietness of the night you wonder why you have no peace in your heart. You wonder why you're still in bondage.

⁵ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, p. 22.

⁶ Paul Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, p. 48.

⁷ Paul Tripp, p. 48.

⁸ Paul Tripp, p. 49.

The problem is your view of spirituality. The solution is to *get to the heart of the problem*, which is *the problem of the heart*. And there's only one who can fix that problem, and we're listening to Him this morning.

This brings us to a second misunderstanding that that Jesus says we must address if we want to be right with God. First, the misunderstanding of spirituality.

II. Jesus confronts the misunderstanding of sin (17-23).

What is sin and why do we struggle with it? If we want to experience true freedom, we need to make sure we have a proper understanding of what sin is and how it functions.

According to Jesus we need to grasp three realities regarding sin.

A. We must recognize the source of sin (17-19). Notice verse 17, "And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable."

Note that the setting has changed. Jesus is no longer talking to the Pharisees nor the crowd. He has entered a house and He's with His disciples. They don't understand the point of what He'd just said in verse 15, so they ask Him about it.

He replies in verse 18 (NIV), "Are you so dull?"⁹ They'd been with Him for over two years by now. This wasn't some peripheral teaching, but a fundamental of His teaching. *Why do we sin?* They still didn't get it. It's tough for people once exposed to an *outside-in* approach to spirituality to see their folly. Part of the reason is due to a wrong view of sin.

How would you answer the question? Where does sin originate? Jesus made two things very clear about the source of sin.

1. *It doesn't come from the outside.* The Lord continues in verses 18-19, "Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him,¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?"

The typical first century Jew, like many folks today, held to the notion that man is born with a good heart. A child enters the world in a state of innocence. It's the external factors that corrupt him. Sin rubs off on him.

That wasn't Jesus' view. "Nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean,'" He said, thus discrediting the notion of the Pharisees who said if you eat food without proper ceremonial washing first you will defile yourself. Wrong, Jesus said. Food is food, and it doesn't matter what kind of ceremony you go through before you eat it. Food goes into the stomach, not the heart. Sin doesn't originate on the outside, but as He'll say in a moment, on the *inside*. Furthermore...

2. *It doesn't have to do with diet.* Mark adds a parenthetical comment at the end of verse 19, "Thus he declared all foods clean." By what He just said, Jesus was nullifying the need for the whole ceremonial system in the Mosaic covenant. He did away with dietary laws. That's why we can eat pork today, for instance.

The Lord didn't explain this to the crowd at the time, but later He did to His disciples. Remember the vision He gave Peter in Acts 10? Listen to Acts 10:11-15: "He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.' 'Surely not, Lord!' Peter replied. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.' The voice spoke to him a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.'"

⁹ ESV, "Then are you also without understanding?"

This was a stunning change for the first century Jews. To help us grasp this, consider this story taken from *Fourth Maccabees* about a Jewish woman and her seven sons. The Gentile authorities tried to force them to eat swine's flesh. Barclay sums up what happened: "They refused. The first had his tongue cut out, the ends of his limbs cut off; and then he was roasted alive in a pan; the second had his hair and the skin of his skull torn off; one by one they were tortured to death while their aged mother looked on and cheered them on; they died rather than eat meat which to them was unclean."¹⁰

Talk about devotion! This woman and her sons chose violent death over disobedience to a dietary law that had been on the books for fourteen centuries. Until Jesus changed that law, by fulfilling that law.

Here's the point. If you don't understand where sin originates, you'll think you can take care of the sin-problem by legislating it, through rules. But rules, even good rules that came from God (like this dietary law), can't solve the sin problem. Rules can show us there is a problem, but they can't solve the problem.

And here's why. The problem isn't external, but internal. Therefore, the solution for sin must address what's on the inside, the *heart*.

B. We must recognize the severity of sin (20-23). Jesus continues in verse 20, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him." There it is again. Just as spirituality works inside-out, so does sin. It's what comes "out of a person" that makes him unclean.

Sin is a lethal problem, and here we gain four insights regarding it.

1. *Sin begins in the heart.* Verse 21 says, "For from within, *out of the heart of man*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality," etc. Jesus is going to list some thirteen sins in a moment, but note where it all begins. *In the heart.*

A man goes into a store and, when no one is looking, picks up a tool, sticks it in his coat, and leaves the store. He's a thief. What's his real problem? It's not his hand. You could cut off his hand and he'd find other ways to steal. He's got a heart problem, right? He has a heart that contains a host of wrong thoughts, such as, "Life is about me. If you have got something I want, I have a right to take it."

God has so much to say in the Bible about the heart. Here are six nuggets.

a. God values the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Proverbs 21:2 "All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart."

b. God knows the heart.

Acts 15:8 "God, who knows the heart..."

Romans 8:27 "And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit..."

c. The source of our trouble is the heart.

Proverbs 4:23 "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

Proverbs 22:15 "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child..."

Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 5:28 "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."¹¹

¹⁰ Barclay, p. 172.

¹¹ Matthew 12:34 "You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."

Acts 5:3 "Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit...?'"

d. What God requires is a new heart.

Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Matthew 22:37 “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”

Psalms 51:10 “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

e. What we lack is the right kind of heart.

Genesis 6:5 “The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”¹²

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (see also Rom 1:21)

f. What God gives is a new heart.

Ezekiel 11:19 “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”

Acts 16:14 “One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.”

2 Corinthians 4:6 “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

Yes, the Bible has much to say about the *heart*. Here Jesus taught that, first, sin begins in the heart. But it doesn’t stop there.

2. *Sin develops in the mind.* Notice the progression as I read the next part of verse 21, “For from within, *out of the heart of man*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder,” etc.

Look again at the order. Sin starts in the heart, and as we’ll see shows up in action. But it develops in the mind. The human heart is not good by nature. It’s evil. It’s depraved, and consequently entertains “evil thoughts” (*dialogismoi kakoi*), that is, evil thinking and reasoning.

3. *Sin shows up in our actions.* What kind of actions? Jesus tells us in verses 21-23 (NIV), “For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, [here are the actions...] sexual immorality [any sexual activity outside of marriage], theft [taking what isn’t yours because you want it; that includes loafing on the job], murder [Jesus said that includes anger without proper cause], adultery [breaking your marriage vow by pursuing someone other than your spouse], greed [living for material things and for selfish purposes], malice [iniquity, wickedness], deceit [the lack of truthfulness in what you say and how you present yourself], lewdness [licentiousness; sensuality; to be unrestrained in moral attitudes and behavior], envy [lit. ‘evil eye,’ a Semitic term for ‘stinginess’], slander [to defame or blaspheme another, including God and people], arrogance [pride] and folly [it refers to the lack of sense in the area of morals].”

So sin starts in the heart, but it doesn’t stay in the heart. It develops in the mind, and eventually shows up in our actions. And where does it end?

4. *Sin results in defilement.* Verse 23 again, “All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” Don’t miss that word, “defile.” In the NIV, “unclean.” There is a condition of moral uncleanness. Sin makes a person unclean in the sight of a holy God. Sin defiles.

¹² See also Gen 8:21

My friend, according to Jesus, the problem is far worse than most people think. Religious people (like the Pharisees) have a narrow, tamed down view of sin. They see only the surface problem. They think sin is breaking rules, but Jesus shows it's much deeper. We do sinful things because we have a sinful heart. All of us do.

So what can we do about this problem? Here's what we must do.

C. We must recognize the solution for sin. And what is the solution? It's not what, but who. He's talking with us right now. He is the solution, and He says that to experience freedom from sin, we must make two personal confessions.

1. *Confession #1: I have a corrupt heart.* The tragedy is that many people think that if they just "do enough good things," God will overlook their sin and accept them. But that's like scrubbing gravestones. Go ahead, wash a gravestone. That doesn't change the reality that you're still standing in the realm of the dead. We can't deal with our sin merely by doing cosmetic cleanup on the outside. The remedy for sin requires that we admit the painful truth. *I have a corrupt heart.*

Then, and only then, am I ready for the second confession.

2. *Confession #2: I need the cross.* Listen to J. D. Jones again, "When I think of it all, I am tempted to cry out, like the leper, 'Unclean! Unclean!' For, like John Bunyan, I feel that sin and corruption do as naturally bubble out of my heart as water bubbles out of a fountain, until, like him, at the sight of my own vileness I fall deeply into despair. But there is One who can make my defiled heart clean again."¹³

And that One, of course, is Jesus Christ. There is no soap powerful enough to cleanse the sin stains from your heart and mine. But there is cleansing agent that can. According to 1 John 1:7, "...The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

Oh beloved, this is the gospel message. What we cannot do for ourselves, what our good works cannot do, what religion cannot do, Jesus Christ did. On the cross, He took upon Himself the sins of every person who would ever believe upon Him. He endured the just payment for those sins deserve. He provided a cleansing for those sins. And now, He, the risen Christ says, if you will repent and believe in Me, I will remove your sins and make you clean.

My friend, have you experienced the cleansing power of Jesus Christ?

Take Inventory: Let's ask ourselves these important questions...

1. *Am I right with God?* Do you know for sure that if you died today you would go to heaven? Are you sure you are right with God?

The Pharisees thought they were right with God because of their good deeds, but Jesus said they had a wrong view of spirituality and of sin. They weren't spiritual. They were lost sinners. They needed to be saved. What about you?

It's possible to answer the first question *yes*, and be wrong. You can think you're right with God and not be. So a second question is critical...

2. *Why do I think I am right with God?* Are you trusting in Christ alone for your standing with God, or in something else? "No one comes to the Father except by *Me*," He said. There is no other way. God saves those who trust Him, and Him alone.

Closing Song: #406 "*My Hope Is in the Lord*" (all four verses)

¹³ J. D. Jones, p. 217.

Community Group Discussion:

1. This morning we considered what Jesus had to say in Mark 7:14-23. Take time to re-read His words in this passage. What's the context of this instruction? What prompted Jesus to give this teaching? What effect do His words have on you?
2. The title of this message was, "*The Problem of the Heart is the Heart of the Problem.*" Take a moment to unpack those words. In your own words, what is the problem of the human heart? What does it mean to say that this is the heart of the problem for us?
3. In verse 15, Jesus takes an inside-out approach to spirituality. What does that mean? How is that different from the approach that mere religion takes?
4. In verses 18-23 Jesus confronts the way people typically think about sin. What is the typical perspective? What does Jesus have to say about sin? In practical terms, what difference will it make in our lives if we embrace what Jesus had to say about sin?
5. What does it mean to say that the cross of Jesus is the solution for the problem of the human heart? What are some practical implications for how we live personally, and as a church family?