

“Then are you also without understanding?”

A. Intro: *Majoring in Grace*

B. Sermon in a Sentence: *Grace will lead us home.*

C. Context of Mark 7:1-23 and Summary of Today's Message from Mark 7:14-23

God gave his Laws to our sin-fallen world for two purposes: 1) to set clear boundaries for what is good and holy; and 2) to reveal our desperate need for his forgiveness and grace since we all fall short of the Laws' standards. In God's plan to reconcile his estranged children, the Law was given so that his grace might be seen more clearly.

Just prior to today's scripture selection, Jesus confronts the Jewish religious leaders about their misplaced reverence for their homemade holiness rules. Jesus points out how their love of these excess traditions results in a warped version of God's love.

The disciples have been hearing and seeing Jesus teach about grace for many months. But they haven't yet connected their own residual cultural habits and prohibitions with a grace-less life. His question to the disciples is meant to shake them awake from their spiritual stupor.

Conversely, God's question to us is: How well do we understand and live by his grace? God's truth for us in today's message is that **what** we do in the Christian life is less important than **how** and **why** we do these things.

D. TODAY'S BIBLE PASSAGE: Mark 7:14-23 (ESV)

Mark 7:14-15 ¹⁴ 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.”

Mark 7:17-23 ¹⁷ And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? 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?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

E. My Reflections

God's grace saved me decades ago, and His grace continues to transform me each day. When Jesus taught his disciples about holy living from the inside out, he was speaking to any person who might be tempted to assess their own or others' spiritual life based upon external factors. How often we attend church, how much we serve or give, how deeply we know the bible, the words we choose, the standards we keep – these are meant to be fruit and not roots of our spiritual life in Christ.

This season of physical isolation is potentially a time of recalibrating our faith. If we are in any way measuring ourselves by external behavior, rather than our internal surrender to God's grace, we will slowly drift from Christ. The Good News is that Christ gave himself so that we may be grace-defined people who major in love, ultimately entrusting the Lord as the only One who may judge sin and faith.

LIFE APPLICATION STUDY QUESTIONS

1. When did you have trouble understanding a spiritual concept or truth? What helped you?
2. Explain the difference between grace and legalism in a way which a child can understand.
3. How has God's -grace affected your growth in holy living? Be specific.
4. Review the Grace and Religion comparison lists below. What is God teaching you through them?
5. Ask the Lord to fill you to overflowing with his grace and Spirit, then ask him how he desires you to adjust your attitudes or habits.

The Way of Grace

Empowered by the Spirit
Abandoned to God's will
Focused on internal growth in Christ
Results in holy, gracious living
Seeks holy love for all
Trusts God to do what is right
Lives in peace despite circumstances
Leads to a right relationship with God's Laws

The Way of Religion

Empowered by human determination
Self-protective and risk averse
Focused on appearances and rewards
Results in anger & quickness to judge
Seeks to limit love
Stands in God's place of judgment
Lives in turmoil b/c of the need to control
Leads to legalism and rule worship