

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

I. Jesus' Third Tour of Galilee and its Aftermath

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #120
MK 7.14-23 (Parallel Text: MT 15.10-20)

14 ^MJesus, having called the crowd to him again was saying, *"I command you all to keep on taking to heart what I am saying, and truly understand this:*

15 "Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into ^{MT}their mouth. ^MRather, it is what comes out of ^{MT}the mouth of ^Ma person that truly defiles them."

^{MT}Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

16 He replied, *"Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. I command all of you to leave them alone; they are blind guides. If the blind continue to lead the blind, both will certainly fall into a pit."*

17 ^MAfter he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

18 *"Are you so dull?" he asked. "Can't you comprehend that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? 19 For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body."* (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

20 He continued to explain to them: *"What comes out of a person is what defiles them. 21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come--sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person. ^{MT}But to wash with unclean hands does not defile a person."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, **the words of Jesus are italicized in red**. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

| CONTEXT DIGEST | |
|---------------------|---|
| Location | Galilee |
| Timeline | April (Month 26) |
| Jesus' Life Context | Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry |
| | I. Jesus' Third Tour of Galilee and its Aftermath |
| Title | I 3. Jesus Identifies the Source of Sinfulness |

COMMENT:

In today's reading Jesus closed out his 18 months of ministry in Galilee. The third tour ended with a series of heart-breaking setbacks. After experiencing the hypocrisy, rejection and hatred of the Pharisees, to the point of issuing a death decree for him and publicly accusing him of being a Satanist; the selfish mob action of the crowds he had ministered to seeking to take him by force and make him their "king;" and the wholesale defection of his disciples because they did not like the content of his teaching any more, Jesus knew that his ministry in Galilee was through.

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It makes perfect sense that the Galilean ministry would end with Jesus addressing the root cause of the rejection he had endured. In yesterday's reading he showed that hypocrisy was the single greatest sin of his age. In this final teaching he followed up on his rebuke of hypocrisy by going to the root of all human sinfulness. Jesus used the Pharisees as a case in point of the fallen sinful nature that afflicts us all. This was particularly effective because in Jesus' day the Pharisees were universally admired. They were considered to be the most godly, spiritual people in the nation of Israel. The disciples were always shocked when Jesus rebuked or confronted them so openly.

Jesus did not share this view because he could see into their hearts, perceiving the same unbridled sinfulness in them that he observed in everyone else. Jesus rebuked their hypocrisy because in spite of their public expressions of obedience to the traditions down to the tiniest details, their hearts were filled with sinful thoughts and attitudes.

Jesus gave his diagnosis of our sinful human nature in this text. It was universal sinfulness that caused the rejection of his ministry in Galilee, in spite of the greatness of what he had said and done there to reveal the unconditional love, omnipotent power, infinite grace, unending mercy, and sensitive compassion of God.

Jesus saw the same kind of sinful nature in everyone. He redefined spirituality by saying it consists of what is on the inside of us, not our outer actions. Our inner motivations and attitudes determine the value of what we do. Every thought, attitude, behavior and word that arises out of our sinful nature is evil before God.

Therefore, Jesus began his list (MK 7.22) with **"evil thoughts,"** the source of all of specific sinful actions. Evil thinking (our sinful nature) leads to evil behavior every time. He ended the list with **"arrogance and folly,"** describing the pride and foolishness that are at the root of our sinful nature, too.

Jesus's catalogue of specific sins that are characteristic of our sinful nature were based upon the Ten Commandments, specifically commandments #6 to #10. Here they are:

"malice, murder" ... the 6th commandment (Ex. 20.13) **"DO NOT MURDER."**

"sexual immorality, lewdness, adultery" ...the 7th commandment (Ex. 20.14) **"DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY."**

"theft"... the 8th commandment (Ex. 20.15) **"DO NOT STEAL."**

"deceit, slander"... the 9th commandment (Ex. 20.16) **"DO NOT GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY."** (to lie)

"envy, greed" ... the 10th commandment (Ex. 20.17) **"DO NOT COVET."**

Jesus knew that every person has the same sinful nature tucked away within us, whether it shows up publicly or not. The only way to experience true righteousness is by yielding ourselves totally to God, trusting in his ability to hold our sinfulness in check, and believing in his power to fill us with HIS own loving nature. Honesty in acknowledging that we are rotten in the core of our being is the irreplaceable first step in that process.

These are not easy words of Jesus, but they are truth spoken in perfect love. The sooner we swallow our pride and realize that every sin we commit is rooted in a sinful nature that will never leave us until the resurrection, the sooner we will depend upon Jesus with the desperation and dependency he described as true blessing in his "Teaching on the Mount."

Blessed are the...poor in spirit...those who mourn...the meek...those who have ravenous hunger and unquenchable thirst for the righteousness of JESUS living in them by his Spirit--because they have lost hope in any other source of righteousness in themselves. These attitudes come from embracing the truth of our utterly sinful nature.

APPLICATION:

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There is no room for self-righteousness before God. It is hypocritical to insist otherwise.

Insisting on our own righteousness (as the Pharisees did) exhibits total blindness regarding our sinful nature. As Jesus said, failing to acknowledge the reality of our sinful nature is **"evil thinking...arrogant, and foolishness."**

What aspect of your sinful nature do you struggle with the most?

What encourages you the most in your ongoing battle to yield it to God, and trust him to give you his victory over it?

What can you do to focus more on HIS solution for your struggle?