

# You Aren't What You Eat

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help, turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 7.

Gospel according to Mark, chapter 7. And if we read again at verse 14. Mark 7, verse 14. And he called the people to him again and said to them, Hear me, all of you, and understand. 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.

If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

I'm sure that we've all heard or even used the phrase, you are what you eat. You are what you eat. And of course, the phrase is self-explanatory.

[ 1 : 07 ] Because if you eat healthily, you will be healthy. And if you eat unhealthily, you will be unhealthy. And likewise, if you overeat, you'll be overweight.

If you undereat, you'll be underweight. And so the phrase, you are what you eat, it's self-explanatory. But it stresses to us that it's important to have a balanced diet and be healthy and fit.

And I'm speaking to myself when I'm saying this. Because at the beginning of a new year, our diet is one of the first things that we try and change. With many people, their New Year's resolution is to try and get fit or go on a diet or lose weight or go to the gym or give up the old habits of smoking or go on a detox of alcohol for the first two months of the new year.

But in our minds, the old problems of 2015 have passed. And now 2016, it's a new year, it's a new beginning, it's a new you.

And I'm sure that we've all been bombarded with the adverts and all the clips of television, all urging us to see the need to bring changes to our lives in a new year.

[ 2 : 20 ] And of course, all these changes in our lives will probably be for the better. They're to make us feel better and feel healthier and fitter. Because as the old saying goes, you are what you eat.

But when Jesus confronts the Pharisees in this passage of Mark's Gospel, Jesus is telling the Pharisees the opposite. That it's not so much as what goes into your mouth that defines you, but it's what comes out of your mouth that defines you.

In other words, Jesus is telling the Pharisees, you aren't what you eat. You aren't what you eat. And this is important because the Pharisees thought and taught that if they avoided certain foods which were classed as unclean, and they kept to this particular diet, that they would have inner purity, and they would be holy, and they would be acceptable to God because of their diet.

The Pharisees thought and taught, they taught, you are what you eat. You are defiled and sinful because you eat defiled and sinful food. But Jesus, in the day of the Gospel, Jesus was challenging the Pharisees and emphasizing to them, you aren't what you eat.

You aren't defiled and sinful because you eat defiled and sinful food. You are defiled and sinful because that is the condition of your heart.

[ 3 : 45 ] You are defiled and sinful because the heart of your problem is the problem of your heart. But in order to explain what Jesus was talking about, Jesus did as he always did when he wanted to explain something.

He told a parable. And he told a parable that would make the separation between those who heard Jesus and those who were listening to Jesus.

And there is a difference. There is a difference. And we'll see the difference as we consider together this parable of Jesus. So I'd like us to consider this passage of verses 14 to 23, just under three headings.

The presentation of the parable, the problem of the parable, and the purpose of the parable. The presentation of the parable, the problem of the parable, and the purpose of the parable.

So we'll look firstly at the presentation of the parable. Jesus gives us the parable in verses 14 to 16. He called the people to him again and said to them, Hear me all of you and understand.

[ 4 : 57 ] 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. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

The presentation of the parable from Jesus, it actually arises from a debate we considered last time when we were looking in Mark's Gospel.

It was a debate between Jesus and the Pharisees over the issue of tradition and keeping the tradition of the elders. And it all started as we saw in verse 2, where Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees because they saw Jesus and his disciples eating bread with unwashed hands.

And Mark simply says in verse 2, they found fault. They found fault, which was normal for the Pharisees. Because the Pharisees were always good at finding fault with people, especially Jesus. But what the Pharisees picked up on and found fault with, it seems so petty, it seems so minor, even irrelevant and insignificant to us. But the fault which the Pharisees found with Jesus and his disciples, it wasn't an issue of food hygiene, where their hands had to be washed before handling food.

[ 6 : 17 ] It was the issue of religious purity, where the religious leaders taught that the Jews were not to eat food unless their hands had to be washed in this certain special manner.

Because before a Jew would sit down and eat their food, they would have to perform this short cleansing ritual in which they would wash their hands and then they'd wash their arms in order to make themselves religiously pure.

And Mark went on to explain that there were many other traditions which have been passed down from the tradition of the elders to the Pharisees. And the Pharisees were upholding all these things, such as, he says, the washing of cups and pitchers and copper vessels and couches.

But this tradition of outward cleansing and purity which the Pharisees held to so rigidly and followed so obsessively to the letter, Jesus referred to it as nothing more than hypocrisy.

Because when the Pharisees found fault with the outward actions of Jesus and his disciples, Jesus found fault with the inward reality of the Pharisees' heart.

[ 7 : 30 ] Because the fault which was to be found wasn't to be found on the outward appearance of a person. The fault was to be found in their heart. Which is why Jesus responded to the accusations of the Pharisees by saying, Isaiah put it perfectly when he described you hypocrites.

This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And when Jesus issues this indictment of hypocrisy upon the Pharisees, He condemns them for hiding behind their mask of religion.

He accuses them of presenting an appearance of this religious righteousness, this pious character. And Jesus finds fault with the Pharisees all because he knew their heart.

He knew their heart. Jesus knew that their heart, it was far from him. Jesus knew that their heart was far from him. And so Jesus brings this debate with the Pharisees to its conclusion.

And he does so by calling all the crowds together, along with the Pharisees, and he presents to them this parable. Because in order to explain his accusation of hypocrisy against the Pharisees, Jesus did as he always did when he wanted to explain something.

[ 8 : 57 ] He told a parable. He said to them, 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. But as I said earlier, Jesus told this parable in order to make a separation between those who heard Jesus and those who listened to Jesus.

And there's a difference. And the difference is between the careless hearer and the careful listener. And what we notice when we look at the ministry of Jesus, we see that he always spoke to the crowds using parables.

In fact, Mark tells us back in chapter 4 that Jesus didn't speak to the crowds without using a parable. But we're not to be tempted into thinking that the parables of Jesus were all these sermon illustrations or little stories to entertain his crowd in order to keep their attention.

Instead, the purpose of all the parables was to get the hearer deeply involved. And see that they or we are being portrayed in the parable.

[ 10 : 14 ] And that the parable is speaking directly to us and to our situation and to our heart. And by seeing that the parable is about us personally, the parable is seeking to compel us, compel us, the hearer, to listen to the words of Jesus.

And Jesus is wanting us to make a personal decision about him and about the kingdom of God. But what's interesting about the way in which Jesus told the parables is that it wasn't to make his teaching easier to understand.

It was to make the distinction between the hearer and the listener. It was to make the separation between the careless hearer and the careful listener.

And that's why Jesus begins and ends the parable with this emphasis upon hearing. where he says, listen to me, everyone. There's this universal call to everyone in the audience to listen to what he has to say.

And then after telling the parable in verse 15, Jesus then issues another universal call in verse 16. He says, if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

[ 11 : 34 ] Let him hear. And so the emphasis is all about hearing. And with all the parables that Jesus told, hearing is important. Hearing is important because the response of the heart is directly dependent upon what is heard.

The response of the heart is directly dependent upon what is heard. Therefore, the problem which the Pharisees had and the problem which Jesus sought to highlight wasn't the problem of their heart, but it wasn't just the problem of their heart, but it was also the problem of their hearing because they weren't listening.

They weren't listening. The reason the heart of the Pharisees was so far from Jesus is because they weren't listening. They could certainly hear Jesus.

They could hear what he was saying. It was an audible voice in their ears, but they weren't listening, which is why Jesus turned away from the Pharisees after speaking to them.

And, my unconverted friend, before we look at this parable of Jesus any further, I want to ask you, are you listening?

[ 12 : 54 ] Are you listening? Does Jesus have your attention this morning? Does Jesus have your attention? Are you hearing what Jesus is saying to you?

Are you a hearer or are you a listener? Are you a careless hearer or are you a careful listener when it comes to Jesus and the message of the gospel?

Does Jesus have your undivided attention? Or are you just undergoing your weekly routine? Drifting in and out of consciousness.

Maybe dozing in church. Maybe even falling asleep under the sound of the gospel while the flames of hell surround you. But Jesus is saying, he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And, my friend, the reason your heart is far from Jesus is all because you aren't listening.

[ 13 : 57 ] It's all because you aren't listening because the response of your heart is dependent upon what you hear. And this parable is telling us today we need to listen to Jesus.

We need to listen to Jesus. Because our heart, it's in a state of ruin. It's in a state of ruin. And so Jesus is giving us the presentation of the parable.

But secondly, we see the problem of the parable. The problem of the parable. It says in verse 17, And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. 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? Since it enters not his heart, but his stomach, and is expelled.

Thus he declared all foods clean. What we read in these verses is that the problem of the parable, it wasn't with the author of the parable.

[ 15 : 06 ] The problem of the parable was with the hearer of the parable. And the problem was that the parable which Jesus told had made a separation between the careless hearer and the careful listener.

By telling the parable, Jesus had made a distinction between the Pharisee and the disciple. Because the Pharisees, they were the careless hearer of the parable.

Where they would only hear the parable. They would only hear a riddle that they couldn't understand. And the result of hearing the parable was that their life would remain unchanged and unmoved by what they've heard.

And if anything, when Jesus told the parable, it only angered the Pharisees even more. Because when Matthew describes this clash between Jesus and the Pharisees, when he describes it in his Gospel, Matthew tells us why Jesus turned away from the Pharisees after he spoke to them. He tells us why he just walked away from them. Because after Jesus had finished speaking to the Pharisees, the disciples came to Jesus and said, as he was walking away from them, do you know that the Pharisees are offended?

[16:21] They were offended when they heard your parable. And we're told that Jesus turned to his disciples and said, every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

And then Jesus says about the Pharisees, leave them alone. Leave them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind.

And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch. And what Jesus says is remarkable because he's not only told us that the problem of the Pharisees was their heart because their heart was far from him.

But Jesus has not only told us that the problem of the Pharisees was their hearing because they weren't listening. But now Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus explains to us that the problem of the Pharisees was also their sight because they couldn't see.

They were blind and they were leading the blind and they were leading them into destruction. They were blindly leading others away from the truth. And all Jesus says about them is leave them.

[17:25] Just leave them. And it seems a strange thing for Jesus to say about anyone. To leave them alone. Leave them alone in their sin and misery and the judgment of God.

It seems like a strange thing for Jesus to say about anyone whose heart is far from him and who's blindly leading others to destruction. It seems strange for Jesus to say leave him alone.

Leave her alone. Leave them alone. Leave them alone. But the reason Jesus says leave them alone it's not that they haven't been told. It's not that they haven't heard.

It's not that they didn't know. It's that they refused to listen. They refused to listen. And Jesus said about them leave them alone. And my friend that's what Jesus will do with you if you continue to refuse to listen.

He'll leave you alone. You may be a hearer but you'll never be a listener. If you're not listening to Jesus he'll just leave you and you're sinning and misery.

[18:40] They refused to listen. They refused to listen. They refused to hear with understanding. That's what it means to listen.

To listen is to hear with understanding and to respond to what is being said. I mean if you're a parent or a grandparent or an auntie the most common question you'll probably ask your children or your grandchildren one question you often find yourself repeatedly asking again and again and again and you're asking it in order that your children or your grandchildren will pay attention to what you're saying I don't know about you but I always find myself asking the same question are you listening?

Are you listening? It seems that most of the time my question falls on deaf ears as David and Finley do the exact opposite of what I'm telling them but I don't think it would matter how high I raise my voice or how often I ask the question and it's not that they don't hear me and it's not that they can't hear me it's the fact that they refuse to hear with understanding they refuse to listen and respond appropriately and that's what Jesus is talking about here with the Pharisees the problem the Pharisees had was that they refused to listen they were careless hearers and you know my friend there are far too many careless hearers here today far too many because your condition of having your heart far from Jesus and blindly following others to this destructive end in hell your condition isn't because you have never heard the gospel it's not that you have never heard the name of Jesus it's not that you've never had the privilege of experiencing a Christian witness in your home or in your family or in your community it's not even the fact that you're unaware of the uncertainty of life and the reality of eternity because we were reminded again and confronted by a sudden death only in this past week reminded of the shortness of time and the length of eternity my dear friend I don't know what it's going to take to make you turn to Jesus I don't know what it's going to take but I do know that if you do not turn it will end with an eternity in hell and as time goes by and you get older you and I both know that you can't afford to be a careless hearer much longer because you need to start listening you need to start being a careful listener to the gospel because that's what a disciple of Jesus is that's what a follower of Jesus is one who carefully listens to what Jesus is saying and the reason Jesus says it because he loves you and he wants you to follow that's why he

tells you about hell that's why he tells you about destruction that's why he tells you that there will be a place of eternal damnation for you if you don't turn to him because he loves you a careful listener seeks to listen intently to God and his word and that's what the disciples did with this parable because as they listened and considered the parable they could see their life being mirrored in this parable and even though they confessed their lack of understanding they said to Jesus we don't really know what this means what are you talking about and even though they asked Jesus to explain the parable their desire was to submit to the Lord and carefully listen and understand the spiritual lesson that Jesus was trying to teach and when we look at the parable which Jesus told and the explanation he gave we'd probably say that what Jesus is saying it's obvious to us it seems straightforward because Jesus says there's nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him but the things which come out of him those are the things that defile a man and Jesus explains the parable by saying do you not understand that whatever goes into a man from the outside cannot defile him because it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach and it's illuminated and then Mark adds the little note at the end of verse 19 thus he declared all foods clean and so the difficulty which the disciples and the

[ 23 : 49 ] Pharisees had trying to understand what Jesus was saying is that as Jews they had all been brought up with these strict dietary codes a code that categorised food as either clean or unclean and as I said the Pharisees taught and they thought that if they avoided all these unclean foods and kept to a particular diet then they would be clean they would have inner purity they would be holy before God they would be acceptable to him because of all their outward actions and they thought you are what you eat because if you eat unclean foods you'll be unclean if you eat clean foods you'll be clean it's as simple as that but the parable Jesus says he's explicitly stating that it's not that what goes into your mouth that defiles you it's what comes out of your mouth that defiles you in other words Jesus was saying you aren't what you eat you aren't defiled and sinful because you eat defiled and sinful food you are defiled and sinful because of the condition of your heart the heart of the problem it's always the problem of the heart and Jesus is saying that our problem of sin doesn't start from the outside the problem of sin starts from the inside because the problem isn't about what's on the outside coming into us the problem of sin is about what's inside coming out of us and as

Jesus goes on to explain the purpose of the parable what he says about our heart and the darkness of our heart it's frightening it's frightening he's given to us the presentation of the parable he's given to us the problem of the parable but then Jesus stresses to us lastly the purpose of the parable because he says in verse 20 in the purpose of the parable he said what comes out of a person is what defiles him for from within out of the heart of man come evil thoughts sexual immorality theft murder adultery coveting wickedness deceit sensuality envy slander pride foolishness all these things these evil things come from within and they defile a person and when

Jesus told this parable initially the purpose of the parable was to contrast the teaching of the Pharisees with the teaching of Jesus because the Pharisees had taught and emphasized all the traditions of the elders which had been passed out from generation to generation and twisted along the way to the point that the Pharisees taught that moral purity before a holy god depended upon all the outward actions of a person but when the gospel arrived in the person of Jesus Christ Jesus taught that our moral purity before a holy and a just god has nothing to do with washing or not washing it's got nothing to do with touching things or not touching things it's got nothing to do with eating certain foods or not eating certain foods Jesus taught that the purity before a holy god was nothing to do with the external observance of the law it was all to do with the inward submission of the heart and Jesus says this because it's easy to follow commands outwardly it's easy to do it to be seen it's easy to keep up appearances it's easy to perform all the religious duties so that everyone else knows that you are being holy it's easy to carry out all these ecclesiastical ceremonies but as the

Lord said long ago to his prophet Samuel the Lord does not see as man sees because man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart and so the real issue which Jesus was addressing wasn't religious purity the real issue was the purity of the heart the real issue is the heart and in his explanation of the parable Jesus puts it bluntly to us because Jesus tells us that our heart is deceitful above all things desperately wicked and my friend whatever view you have of yourself however highly you rate yourself and your own heart the diagnosis Jesus gives of your heart and my heart is one of complete corruption it's deceitful above all things desperately wicked and that

has been our condition since

Adam fell in the garden of Eden when the Lord was going to flood the world because of sin in Noah's day we're told that the Lord saw the wickedness of man he saw that it was great in the earth and that the thoughts and intents of man's heart was evil continually my friend the diagnosis of our heart it's not a good one because our heart is sick our heart is sin sick and it's a sickness which we're born with we're conceived in guiltiness and sin that's what we were singing in Psalm 51 we have this hereditary disease passed on from our parents and their parents and their parents and no one is exempt from this problem and what Jesus wants to make clear to us is that our sinfulness it's not because of external influences it's all because of our sinful heart and we can't blame anyone else for our sinful heart we can't put the blame on the example of others we can't blame the company we keep we can't blame the television we watch we can't put the blame even on our ignorance we can't put the blame on the devil and we certainly can't put the blame on God and claim that it's all his fault the way I am my friend the point that Jesus is making is that we don't have anyone to blame for our sinful heart but ourselves all me all me and when we read these words of [ 30 : 54 ] Jesus the list he's issued to us of the state of our sinful heart from within out of the heart of man come evil thoughts sexual immorality theft murder adultery coveting wickedness deceit sensuality envy slander pride foolishness all these evil things come from within they defile the person and what we mustn't do when we read these words is apply them to all the notorious criminals of society and say that yes that description it applies to the terrorist and the rapist and the murderer and the thief but not to me I'm not like that but that's the point that's the point Jesus is making because he's saying to us that's exactly what you're like that's exactly what you're like because Jesus is addressing all of mankind all of us whether male or female high or low rich or poor young or old educated or not

Jesus is describing the sinful nature of our heart and in his commentary I'm always quoting him J.C. Ryle he speaks about the universal condition everybody's condition of their heart and he says the seeds of all the evils here mentioned in these verses lie hidden within us all they may lie dormant in our lives they may be kept down by the fear of consequence the restraint of public opinion the dread of discovery the desire to be thought as acceptable and above all they might be kept down by the almighty grace of God but everyone says Ryle everyone has within them the root of every sin and so my friend if you are en route to hell you don't have anyone to blame but yourself because it's your sinful heart that will deliver you into the deepest darkest torments of hell but what Jesus is saying to us today in the gospel is that you need to hear and you need to understand you need to listen and respond to the message of the gospel because it's due to the sinfulness of our heart that you can't understand the message of the gospel and that's the purpose of this parable that's the whole purpose of this parable it's to show you that it's your sinful heart that hinders you from believing in Jesus Christ and understanding the wonder of the gospel and Jesus has mentioned this all throughout this passage because when he presented this parable to us he said hear me everyone and understand and then he ended the parable in verse 16 with the words if anyone has ears to hear let him hear and when the disciples highlighted their problem of not understanding the parable Jesus asked them are you also without understanding do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him because it does not enter his heart and so what we see is that all the way through this passage Jesus has emphasized the reason that you cannot understand the message of the gospel is because of your sinful heart yes you can hear the gospel you can hear the sermons you can hear the preacher you can hear all the sermons about the life of Jesus and the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus and the second coming of Jesus you can hear all the sermons about Jesus about his love and his forgiveness and his grace and his mercy and his faithfulness and his goodness and his kindness and his patience and his compassion and his beauty and his sovereignty and his authority.

You can hear it all. You can hear everything about Jesus. But what hinders you from listening and responding to the gospel is your deceitful heart.

[ 35 : 25 ] My friends, sin has so affected you that even the simplest of truths about Jesus and Christianity are obscured. And the clearest statements of the gospel will sound to you maybe foolish or mysterious.

It'll be like listening to a foreign language where you're only picking up one word or two but not understanding the whole message. And you'll remain in darkness under the power of sin.

My friend, you'll remain in darkness until you ask to be taken out of that darkness. You'll remain in sin until you ask Jesus to cleanse you.

Because what Jesus is saying to us on the pages of scripture today is that eternal life, yours for the taking. Forgiveness of sin, yours for the taking.

Peace with God, yours for the taking. But Jesus says, you do not have because you do not ask.

[ 36 : 33 ] You do not have because you do not ask. So ask him. Ask him. Ask him. My friend, I can't ask for you.

You need to do it yourself. I can't save you how I wish I could. If I could, I would. I'd save you all. But I can't.

You need to ask for yourself. But when you ask and when you plead with Jesus to save you, it's then he'll shine into the darkness of your sinful heart.

and he'll create within you a clean heart. And he'll renew a right spirit within you. My friend, is that what you want?

Is that what you want? Is that what you desire more than anything else in this life? What are you clinging to in this life? Is that not what you desire more than anything? Do you want to be saved?

[ 37 : 38 ] I mean, why are you here? Why do you come do you not want to be saved? Because it's not what you do that will save you.

It's only what has been done that will save you. Jesus died on the cross to save sinners. Save people with awful hearts like that.

My friend, do you want to be saved? It's a simple question. Do you want to be saved? If you want to be saved, then listen to the promise of Jesus.

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.

for everyone who asks, receives, the one who seeks, finds, and to him or to her who knocks, it will be opened.

[ 38 : 48 ] That's the promise. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Lord, we give thanks for thy goodness to us. We thank thee, Lord, for the message of the gospel, that it is for us, it is addressed to us.

And Lord, we marvel that even with our sinful hearts, Lord, one who is willing to cleanse us, to create within us a clean heart, help us then to pray, help us to ask, knowing that when we ask, we will receive, when we seek, we will find, when we knock, that door to eternal life will be opened to us.

Bless us then, we pray, bind us together, keep us on mercy's ground until we find thee, and go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 51.

Psalm 51 from verse 7 down to the verse marked 10. It's on page 281 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 51 from verse 7. It's still David's prayer for cleansing, asking the Lord to cleanse his heart.

He says, Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me?

[ 40 : 16 ] That's a hyssop, was a hyssop branch, with blood, and Jesus speaks about, or we're told about it at the crucifixion, about the hyssop branch and the blood.

Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me? I shall be cleansed so. Yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow. Of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice, that so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

All mine iniquities blot out, thy face hide from my sin. Create a clean heart, Lord, renew a right spirit me within. These verses in conclusion of Psalm 51 to God's praise.

Needs Belay S slave If this not sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so.

Give us your peace, and let thy heart be white, earth and earth so.

[ 41 : 34 ] O gladness and your joyfulness, take thee to hear the voice.

That so these very bold which thou hast spoken, may rejoice.

All my iniquities water, thy grace, thy heart, all my sins.

Be it, and bring our glory to the right living way.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.