

**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.” Mark 7:14-16**

*Find a quiet place to begin. Take a few deep breaths. Ball your hands up into a fist and think about all of the frustrations, irritations, and worries of the day. Now take a long slow breath. As you release your fists, ask God to take away your anxiety and frustration of the day, and open your heart and mind to the study of his word.*

### **Read Mark 6:53, then Mark 7:1-8**

1. From Mark 6, where are Jesus and his disciples located currently?
2. Where did the Pharisees come from?
3. What is the Pharisee’s mission upon seeing Jesus? (Use what you know of their behavior already and what this text says)
4. What question do they ask Jesus and why is it important?
5. How does he respond?
6. Jesus quotes scripture back to the Pharisees from the book of Isaiah, which is the same book that Mark used earlier in his gospel to talk about John. Is there a possible connection between the two?

### **Read Mark 7:8-13**

1. What is Jesus response to the Pharisees about the tradition they had? Paraphrase his response in your own words.
2. Why was this tradition important to the Pharisees?
3. What does Jesus think about it? Are there issues he deems as more important? What are they?

### **Read Mark 7:14-23**

1. Who does Jesus talk to in this section?
2. What does he say to them about traditions?
3. When his disciples come to him, what do they ask Jesus?
4. What does Jesus try to make clear to them?

**The Pharisees were very concerned about personal holiness (they believed following the law and their traditions) kept them holy and clean. Jesus makes the case here that the Pharisees have abandoned the real law (which included provisions for taking care of others) and made holiness about some other thing.. something that God didn’t ask his people to do.**

5. Think back to your own church experience, or experience with Christians. Have you ever felt judged or condemned because you didn’t live up to the traditions they believed in? Why or why not?
6. What does Jesus say defiles or makes a person Unclean?

7. What are they?
8. Have you personally done anything on this list?
9. What does that indicate about your status or relationship with God?

**Read Mark 7:24-30 also Read Matthew 15:21-28**

1. Where does Jesus go next?
2. Who came to see Jesus even though he doesn't want people to know where he is?
3. What does she do and say? (Use both accounts and write down what she does)
4. How do Jesus disciples respond?
5. How does Jesus respond?
6. Does his dealing with her surprise you?
7. Does the way his disciples treat her surprise you?
8. What happens in the end to the woman's daughter?
9. What do you think the woman thought of Jesus after this encounter?

**Read Mark 7:31-37**

1. Where is Jesus in this story?
2. Who does he heal in this story? What kind of problems did the man have?
3. Who brought him to Jesus?
4. From the previous weeks, who did Jesus heal in the Decapolis? Do you remember what Jesus commanded this man to do?
5. How does Jesus heal him?
6. What does Jesus command them after he heals the man?
7. Do they obey?
8. What was the people's reaction to Jesus following this healing? Contrast it with the last time Jesus was in this region.

**Imagine now you are a disciple of Jesus witnessing these things. You've been following him around now for quite some time. You are used to his miraculous dealings with your people. You've seen him heal people and cast out demons, and at this point- you yourself have been able to do miracles as well. Now imagine believing your whole life that the traditions outlined by the Pharisees were true, but Jesus (your leader) refutes them. He tells you all foods are clean, which you have been taught is sinful. Then you follow him into the gentiles land, where people hate the Jews, and an unclean, gentile woman is begging him for healing. You think to yourself that Jesus has come for your people, not her people. But Jesus goes and heals this woman anyways. Your worldview is getting turned upside down. The foods you've never been permitted to eat are pronounced clean by your leader. The traditional washing ceremonies and the way you've been taught to keep clean is said to be meaningless. And now your leader is healing people you've been taught to never associate with.**

1. Do you see any connections between these stories? What are they?
2. What do you make of Mark pairing these stories together for us? What connections does he want us to draw from the stories?