**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**

**Watertown, WI**

**“Thus He Declared”**

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Mark 7:14-23

The Israelites were a people set apart for God. He adopted them as His own children. As members of His family, they had special rules that other people did not. There were many rules that God gave them, including who to eat and not eat with, what food to eat and what food not to eat, as well as the well-known rules of not working on the Sabbath. If they followed these rules, they would be His people; they would be a people set apart, a special people. When they forsook these rules, it was often because they were chasing after the gods of the other nations.

When they forsook their God and went after other gods, they lost the gift that God had given them, their identity as His children. They lost what made them different from all the other nations around them. Instead of being special, they were common, no different than the pagans around them.

The word repeated a few times in our reading for today is the word “defile.” Literally, it can be translated as “made to be common.” In our reading from last week, the Pharisees were accusing Jesus’ disciples of something far greater than eating with dirty hands. They were accusing the disciples of being pagans and acting as such. Which, of course, is an attack on Jesus Himself.

What sort of a rabbi, what sort of a prophet, would have pagans walking around with him? Remember the context, though. For much of the story of the Children of Israel, they were wandering away from God and defiling themselves by doing far worse things than just eating with unclean hands. The Pharisees, and pharisaical Judaism in general, were a reaction against the constant defilement of Israel.

The Pharisees wanted the children of Israel to be different, to be special. That’s not a bad thing to want; it’s what God wanted them to do. The problem is that many of the Children of Israel at the time of Christ had forsaken their God in their attempts to follow the law. They put their own laws above the laws of God. The god that they were trying so hard to appease was not the true God; it was a god they had created.

It’s clear they were worshipping a false god because when the true God shows up, they kill Him. It doesn’t matter the signs that He does, the miracles He performs; His knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures don’t matter. He doesn’t fit the shape of the god they have created and so they get rid of Him. The Jews today are no different; they have defiled themselves and worship a false god of their own creation.

There are many people today who think of Christianity as a religion of rules to be followed. There are even Christians who think that Christianity is all about being a good person, about doing and saying good things. The problem is that they make Christianity all about themselves. If you say being a Christian is doing good things, then you are making Christianity all about you. In reality, Christianity is not all about you. The Bible is not all about you; it’s all about Christ.

There are many denominations, many pastors, who spend their whole sermons talking about you. Don’t get me wrong, there is lots of room for applying the text to your lives. The problem is that, first and foremost, the Bible isn’t about you; it’s about Christ. If you want to know what a section of the Bible means for you, the first thing you need to do is figure out what it says about Christ.

Thank God that the Bible isn’t all about you and me, thank God that Christianity is not all about you or me. We are sinful people, sinful right down to our core, down to our heart. If Christianity was all about what you and I do, we would be in a lot of trouble. But just how sinful are we?

Although Christians have always believed in Original Sin, the term *Original Sin* becomes popular through the writings of a theologian named Augustine of Hippo during the 4th century. The doctrine of Original Sin is this: since Adam fell into sin, sin has been passed down from person to person through all generations. Original Sin is that sin; it is the sin inside of us which causes us to commit “actual sins.” “Actual sins,” are sins that we commit daily. Jesus gives us a pretty good starter list in our reading for today but there are many more.

Original Sin is different than the sins that we commit; it is the sin which motivates us to commit more sin. Original Sin may not be a committed sin, but it makes us just as guilty as actual sins do. The doctrine of Original Sin teaches us that we are not only guilty of our own sins, but also of the sin which we have inherited from Adam.

That’s why we baptize children. There are some who would say that we shouldn’t baptize children because they can’t sin as they don’t understand what sin is. You see the problem again? They make it all about you. It’s not about what you do or do not understand; it’s all about God, all about Christ and His will for creation. Whether or not we know what sin is doesn’t change sin. Whether you know the thing coming at your head is a rock or not won’t change its impact. Whether they know they sin or not is a moot point. Jesus tells us in our reading for today that the hearts of all men are sinful. If their heart is sinful, they too are sinful.

It doesn’t sound fair, does it? Why should the guilt of one man’s sin make me guilty as well? This is the question that really convinces people to reject Original Sin. But here is the problem again: we are forgetting about Christ.

The Bible talks about two Adams, the old and the new, the lesser and the greater. The first Adam brought sin into the world; the second Adam brought righteousness into the world. The biggest problem with rejecting Original Sin, with saying that God doesn’t hold the sin of children against them, is that you are limiting what Christ did for us. He died on the cross to take away the sins of the whole world. Not only that, but He lived a perfect life, a righteous life.

In the waters of Holy Baptism, your sins have been removed from you, they are forgiven. You have been given instead the righteousness of Christ. Through Adam, we all received the guilt of his sin and our own sin. Through Christ, we have received forgiveness of not only our own sins but Adam’s sin as well. We have also received the righteousness of Christ. When you think about it, that’s not fair either. Why should the perfect Son of God die, and why is it fair that His death takes away our sin?

Adam brought sin; Jesus brought righteousness. Because of the work of Christ, you and I have been made new. Because of the work of Christ, you and I have been set apart. We are not common, we are not defiled, rather, we are a special people who have been saved by a special God.

Through that God, we have received the power to resist the Original Sin inside of us, we have been given the power to overcome the Old Adam which causes us to sin. Now we can repent, turn away from our sin, and fight against our sin. You will never get rid of the Original Sin inside of you that causes you to sin, but one day, Christ will. Your sin is forgiven, but it still clings to you like an infection.

One day, Christ will return, and all sin will be gone. Your bodies will be made new, free from the Original Sin you inherited from Adam. One day, Christ will return, and all will be made new. All the effects of sin will be removed from this world including our separation from God. One day, the greatest enemy and the greatest effect of sin will be gone, death. Death’s day will be done, and we will live forever in eternal life in a world untouched by sin.