

# Create in Me a Clean Heart , O God

**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost** (Proper 17b) September 2, 2018

## **Psalm 51:7, 10-12, 2 (Introit)**

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

and cleanse me from my sin!

<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

<sup>10</sup> **Create in me a clean heart, O God,**

**and renew a right spirit within me.**

<sup>11</sup> **Cast me not away from your presence,**

**and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

and uphold me with a willing spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

and cleanse me from my sin!

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

<sup>14</sup> And [Jesus] called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) <sup>20</sup> And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, <sup>22</sup> coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

## **In the Name of Jesus.**

Jesus came to make us clean, but not in the way of the Pharisees. Jesus came to make us clean, but not in the way of the Law. Jesus came to make us clean, but not in the way we could've expected, nor in the way our world makes things clean, nor in the way we try to make each other clean.

He came to make us clean not from the outside in, but the inside out.

Our world makes people clean from the outside in. We start with what is outside. We start with the actions a person does, and if we can make those clean, then we have made the person clean. Or at least clean enough.

So, if a man robs a bank, you have the judge sentence him to 10 or 15 years for his outward behavior. You get him under control by putting him bodily behind bars. After 10 or 15 years of imprisonment coupled perhaps with some behavioral modification counseling, he leaves prison with supposedly better behaviors.

We used outward pressure to change his actions, his behaviors. And if it works, we count that a victory.

We do it in smaller things, too. If a young lady doesn't do her homework, we put up physical barriers around her, such as not letting her watch T.V. for the week, and by affecting her from the outside, we change her behavior, and she starts doing her homework.

If we want a young man to mow the lawn each week, we promise him that at the end of summer he'll get a new bike for having mowed the lawn, and with this outward enticement, we affect his outward behavior, and the grass gets cut.

It's called, carrot and stick. In our world, it can really work no other way. For the carrot and the stick give the offer of reward and the threat of punishment which is really nothing other than saying, *Our world works by the Law*. And by the reward and the punishment, the Law brings the pressure for good

outward behavior and hopes to change lives.

By this outward pressure, in our fallen world, we try to improve outward lives.

But Jesus is not concerned with the outward. He works not from the outside in, but from the inside out.

You can have me not robbing banks either by the threat of the Law, or by having me love my neighbor so much that I would never want to harm him and, thus, never want to covet his wealth or steal it.

In both cases, I don't rob the bank. But if the first reason is because I don't want to be hit by the Law on the outside of me, then the opposite reason is that my heart is clean toward my neighbor, and I rejoice in helping him, not in harming. In both cases, my outward behavior may look the same. But the motive is opposite. I am either motivated from the outside by the Law, or from the inside by a clean heart.

The Law can never cleanse the heart. It never motivates good works from the inside. It always brings guilt. It puts pressure on the outside. It finds the sin and accuses the inside. It leaves the conscience unclean and in distress.

Jesus is concerned with our hearts. He wants no conscience in distress. He purges from the inside, giving you a clean heart—a conscience at peace.

So, when the teachers of the Law are teaching people that their problem is what is on the outside, their outward behaviors and influences, Jesus tells the people the opposite. Mark 7:14:

**And [Jesus] 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."**

Then to his disciples he continued,

**"Whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled. 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 evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”**

Jesus is concerned with our hearts.

Our hearts are sinful and unclean. We may be able to disguise this by cleaning up the outside, with outward good works, but that won't change the heart.

I once had a friend tell me how to fix a car engine that was overheating. When the car would be driven for a while, especially on a hot day, the temperature gauge would shoot over to the red-line with overheating.

So, he told me how to fix it. Just take the cover off the gauge panel, he said, and bend the needle of the temperature gauge to the left, so that it can never go far enough right to ever hit the red-line. He was joking of course. No one thinks that would work.

That's what we do when we try to clean up our lives by how they look, by the outside, by following the Law. We bend the needle on the gauge so that it will always show a good temperature, but we don't change the inside problem.

To fix an overheating problem, you can't change the outward appearance of the gauge, you have to repair the real problem inside causing the overheating, the engine.

To fix our problem with sin, with guilt, with shame in our conscience, we can't change the outward appearance, our behavior, our following of the Law, rather, we have to deal with the real problem causing it all, the heart. Jesus is concerned with our hearts, our consciences. So, he gives us the prayer to pray. Psalm 51:10:

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,**

**and renew a right spirit within me.**

*That is, Put to death the old heart of my sinful flesh. In your gift baptism, daily drown my heart which is living in shame. By your Body and Blood given me to eat and drink, continue to crucify my heart of envy and selfishness and arrogance.*

*And create in me, O God, a clean heart. By your promise of Baptism, daily create anew my heart of faith, living in honor. By your Body and Blood which you give me to eat and drink, continue to deliver to me the forgiveness and cleansing you won on the cross, continuing to enliven and strengthen my heart of faith.*

*Create in me a clean heart, O God. Do not cast me away from your face, but let your face shine upon me and be gracious unto me. Take not from me your Holy Spirit, but daily send your Holy Spirit to me in your Word, that he would restore me daily to the joy of your gift of salvation.*

Jesus is concerned with our hearts. He daily cleanses our hearts, so that we now love our neighbor not from the outward pressure of the Law, but from the cleansed conscience which is rejoicing in all the gifts of Jesus, including the gift of being honored to neighbor.

**In the Name of Jesus.**