



Hard Sayings of Jesus

Lesson 4 Jesus Challenges Our View of Ourselves

Worship

Read responsively the selected verses of Psalm 51.

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;

Group: according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

L: Wash away all my iniquity

G: and cleanse me from my sin.

L: For I know my transgressions,

G: and my sin is always before me.

L: Against you, you only, have I sinned

G: and done what is evil in your sight.

L: Surely I was sinful at birth,

G: sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

L: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

G: wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

L: Hide your face from my sins

G: and blot out all my iniquity.

L: Create in me a pure heart, O God,

G: and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Introduction

People hold very different views of what human beings are like “by nature.” Name three of the most common views the world has on what humans are like by nature.



Notes

Out of all the views, which one seems to be dominant in our culture today? Give some examples of what leads you to say this.

Why do you think this is such a popular view?

Studying God's Word

Without a doubt, Jesus speaks some surprising words about what this world is like and the nature of the things we do. But more difficult and surprising than those, at times, are what Jesus has to say about *who we are*.

The Lord knows! The one who made us understands what our hearts are like. He speaks to us about them so that we understand them too—and know where true renewal is found!

Read Mark 7:1,2,14-23.

1. The Pharisees noticed that Jesus' disciples had eaten without giving their hands a traditional ceremonial washing. Why was this such a big deal?
2. What did they believe this did to the disciples?
3. Jesus used this as a chance to address the Pharisees' misunderstanding of the dietary laws of the Old Testament too. The Pharisees saw eating the wrong food in the wrong way as separating one from God and making the person "unclean." Explain Jesus' argument against that.
3. Identify where Jesus says the root of the problem is.

Notes

4. This teaching is largely rejected by our world. What difficult truth about ourselves does Jesus call us to face?

5. What evidence do you see that what Jesus says is true?

Read Matthew 6:19-24.

6. Jesus says that we can either serve God or money, but not both. Explain what makes this saying so hard.

7. Look closely at Jesus' words in verse 24. What might be some warning signs for a Christian who professes love for God that his heart might not be in the right place?

8. Look a little further into verses 25 and 26. What difficult (but wonderful!) thing does God want to accomplish in us?

9. As someone to whom God has given faith in Jesus, you have a new heart. As you consider how God talks to us about money (or adultery, or hatred, etc.), define God's greatest concern for us.

Notes

Summary

Key Points:

- Jesus' words make us face the difficult truth that our hearts are, by nature, wellsprings of evil.
- As believers, our new hearts are daily faced with choices of what (and whom!) we'll love.
- God gives us encouragement to keep our focus on him because he wants to give our hearts true peace.

During the Week

1. Pay attention to the news you hear and conversations you're a part of. Consider how easy it is for this world (and for us!) to assign blame to everyone and everything else while insisting that we're basically good people.
2. Spend time in thought this week about some of the conflicts in your life. How many have you blamed on others? on your circumstances? These may be real factors. But give real consideration to the ways your own stubbornness, jealousy, self-righteousness, or fear might play a role in the conflict. If you feel comfortable, consider putting the situation in front of a trusted friend and asking for his or her insight as well. Repent of any sins you realize, take comfort in God's forgiveness, and seek to make amends.