



29 August – 4 September 2021 Outside, inside

Related Bible reading(s): Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

Bible study on Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

This study can be used by a small family/ household group, or by an online group, or – sometimes with a little adaptation - by an individual.

See our [Guidelines for a weekly Bible study](#)

Begin with an opening prayer

Unchanging God,
refresher, healer and restorer,
give us wisdom and discernment today.
We come to seek you and to hear you,
to be still and present with you,
to be transformed.

Amen.

Read the passage

Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.

In an online group, you could share parts between those present, or use/adapt this week's Share the Word suggestion: Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to go to Share the Word and scroll down to find the Gospel reading.

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

The way the lectionary cuts up Mark 7 is slightly troubling. In leaving out verses 9-13 it strips verses 6-8 of their context and makes it sound like a baseless attack on decent people. That said, this is an account of a sparring match between Jesus and the Pharisees over the Law (what Moses had set before the people in Deuteronomy).

The encounter comes in the wake of the feeding of the five thousand. The crowd is still buzzing with the fall-out from that, the disciples are still trying to get their heads round what happened on the hillside and in the boat in the storm – and the Pharisees nit-pick over handwashing. Jesus is having none of it. He explodes at them with a citation of Isaiah 29.13 and an assault (in vv.9-13) on their practice of allowing people to join their group, commit some loose change to the cause, and declare everything they own belongs to God (though they still control it) as a way of getting out of their obligation to look after their parents.

Inevitably what began as a dispute with the Pharisees draws an audience and Jesus talks to the crowd (v.14). It seems that his agenda is to challenge the authority of the Pharisees to interpret the Law; so, this is high stakes stuff. What he says is pretty obvious: what you eat doesn't defile you, it's what you say and do that does that, how you treat people (vv.9-13 being a good example). In both Greek and Hebrew thinking, the heart is the seat of thought and action; so, what you put in the heart will determine what you will think is right, and how you live in the light of it.

Again, the lectionary misses out the key verse (v.19 – indeed, a key section: vv.17- 19). Here Mark makes a general point out of what Jesus is saying, namely that all foods are clean; nothing is on the proscribed list. For Mark's Roman readers this means that pig meat, the staple of Roman cuisine, is still on the menu – good news indeed!

See also:



The green and growing time

Rachel Nicholls introduces the readings in this issue, in conversation with Jenny Cheung.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

We do not know whether anyone in the crowd saw the woman touch Jesus' cloak, though Jesus certainly The Sunday tabloids thrive on catching a celebrity or politician doing something in private that they have condemned in public. 'Hypocrite!' the headlines roar, and the story unfolds with smug satisfaction that someone has been caught out. It seems that there are many in our society willing to point the finger at the failings of others; sadly, some of those attitudes rear their heads in our churches too. Hypocrisy is what Jesus accused the Pharisees of – but is it the same thing? Does anything in this story help us navigate the often murky moral landscape of our workplaces, neighbourhoods and churches? Is there a difference between what Jesus does and what the tabloids do, Sunday by Sunday?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- Is the handle on the outside or the inside – how can you tell?
- What we show of ourselves on the outside reflects what is within – what do other people see in us?
- How can we make sure our values shape our choices and decisions?

A simple worship activity

Make and wear a sign of being connected in God's kingdom.

You will need: lengths of wool or embroidery thread (about 80cm), of many different colours.

- Work in pairs. Ask people to say what their favourite colours are (up to three!), then to choose three lengths of wool/thread of those colours (or as close as possible) to make a friendship bracelet to give to the other person in the pair ([see instructions](#)).
- Have some multicoloured bracelets ready-made for those who may find making one difficult.
- Give each other the bracelets as a sign of how we are connected as a community. Invite people to wear them as a reminder to pray for each other during the coming week, and that we should be influenced, changed and encouraged by one another.

Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to go to more activities in Explore and respond

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Thank you, Lord, for our communities.
Thank you that you have set us where you want us to be.
Thank you for those who support us.
Thank you that you give us strength to help each other.
Thank you that you can turn us inside out as we work together to make our communities the places you want them to be.
Thank you for the strength to be doers and hearers of the word.
Thank you that every perfect gift is from you. Amen.

Amen.

Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to find more prayers, including up-to-date intercessions.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Lord, go with us into our everyday lives,
to honour you in all that we do and say.
May our being and doing reflect your love and your grace.
And when we next meet, may we recognise with thanks
the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Go with God 24/7

Encourage everyone to put their faith into action.

Demonstrate that your faith is positive and joyful. Greet everyone with a smile. Ask people how they are and be prepared to listen to the reply – and without offering comment or advice! Where appropriate, offer to pray for them.

*Encourage everyone to explore their faith this week with the **ROOTS at home** resource.*

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