

**SUNDAY 3 March 2024 - St Paul's Cooma 10am, Bredbo 1145**

### **Introduction**

#### **Hymn 422 - Come, Holy Spirit Come**

**Come Holy Spirit come, In flame our souls with love  
Transforming ev'ry heart and home with wisdom from above  
O let us not despise the humble path Christ trod  
But choose to shame the worldly wise the foolishness of God**

**All knowing Spirit prove the poverty of pride  
By knowledge of the Father's love in Jesus crucified  
And grant us faith to know the glory of that sign  
And in our very lives to show the marks of love divine**

**Come with the gift to heal the wounds of guilt and fear  
And to oppression's face reveal the kingdom drawing near  
Where chaos longs to reign, descend O holy Dove  
And free us all to work again, the miracles of love**

**Spirit of truth arise, inspire the prophet's voice  
Expose to scorn the tyrant's lies and bid the poor rejoice  
O Spirit clear our sight, all prejudice remove  
And help us to discern the right and covet only love**

**Give us the tongues to speak in ev'ry time and place  
To rich and poor to strong and weak the word of love and grace  
Enable us to hear the words that others bring  
Interpreting with open ear the special song they sing**

**Come Holy Spirit dance within our hearts today  
Our earthbound spirits to entrance, our mortal fears allay  
And teach us to desire, all other things above  
That self-consuming holy fire, the perfect gift of love**

### **Greeting**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

### **Sentence of the day**

Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them. Mark 7:15

### **Prayer of Preparation**

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

## Prayer of the Day

Cleanse our consciences, O Lord, and enlighten our hearts through the daily presence of your Son, Jesus Christ; that when he comes in glory to be our judge we may be found undefiled and acceptable in his sight, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever **Amen.**

## The Ministry of the Word

### Leviticus 2:5-6

<sup>2</sup> “If anyone becomes aware that they are guilty—if they unwittingly touch anything ceremonially unclean (whether the carcass of an unclean animal, wild or domestic, or of any unclean creature that moves along the ground) and they are unaware that they have become unclean, but then they come to realize their guilt; <sup>3</sup> or if they touch human uncleanness (anything that would make them unclean) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt; <sup>4</sup> or if anyone thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil (in any matter one might carelessly swear about) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt—<sup>5</sup> when anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned. <sup>6</sup> As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to the LORD a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for them for their sin.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

### Psalms 19:1-3

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup> **Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.**

<sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

<sup>4</sup> **Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.**

<sup>5</sup> It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

<sup>6</sup> **It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.**

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup> **The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.**

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

<sup>10</sup> **They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.**

<sup>11</sup> By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> **But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.**

<sup>13</sup> **Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.**

### Romans 4:13-18

<sup>13</sup> It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. <sup>14</sup> For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, <sup>15</sup> because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. <sup>17</sup> As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. <sup>18</sup> Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

## Mark 67:1-37

### Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

<sup>1</sup> The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus <sup>2</sup> and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup> When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) <sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” <sup>6</sup> He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “ ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. <sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ <sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

<sup>9</sup> And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ <sup>11</sup> But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—<sup>12</sup> then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. <sup>13</sup> Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

<sup>14</sup> Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. <sup>15</sup> Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”

<sup>17</sup> After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. <sup>18</sup> “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) <sup>20</sup> He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

<sup>24</sup> Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. <sup>25</sup> In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. <sup>27</sup> “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” <sup>28</sup> “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” <sup>29</sup> Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” <sup>30</sup> She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. <sup>33</sup> After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. <sup>34</sup> He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means “Be opened!”). <sup>35</sup> At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. <sup>36</sup> Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. <sup>37</sup> People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” This is the gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

### Sermon - Clean and Unclean - Mark 7:1-37

### The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

### Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Gracious God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

### The Lord's Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

### Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies, we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

### The Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

**Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

### Hymn 339 - O Sacred Head Sore Wounded

**O sacred head sore wounded, with grief and shame weighed down;**

**O kingly head surrounded with thorns your only crown;**

death's shadows rise before you, the glow of life decays;  
yet hosts of heaven adore you and tremble as they gaze.

What language shall I borrow to praise you, heavenly friend,  
for this your dying sorrow, you mercy without end?  
Such agony and dying! Such love to sinners free!  
O Christ, all grace supplying, turn now your face on me.

In this your bitter Passion, good Shepherd, think of me,  
look on me with compassion, unworthy though I be:  
beneath your cross abiding for ever would I rest,  
in your dear love confiding, and with your presence blessed.

Lord, be my consolation, my shield when death is near;  
remind me of your Passion, be with me when I fear.  
My eyes shall then behold you, upon your cross shall dwell,  
my heart by faith enfold you; and who dies thus, dies well.

### Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

**Blessed be God forever.**

### The Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Loving God, we thank you for this world of wonder and delight. You have given it to us to care for, so that all your creatures may enjoy its bounty.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that when we turned away from you, you sent Jesus to live and work as one of us, and bring us back to you. He showed us how to love you and set us free to love and serve one another.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that on the cross Jesus took away our sin, all that keeps us from each other and from you. He frees us from hate and fear, from all that destroys love and trust.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

And so with everyone who believes in you, with all the saints and angels, we rejoice and praise you, saying:  
**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said, 'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me.'

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us. Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen**

We who are many are one body, **for we all share in the one bread.**

**The gifts of God for the people of God.**

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord.

### **After Communion**

Father of all we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. **Keep us in this hope that we have grasped: so we and all your people will be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name.**

### **Hymn 187 - Let All Creation Dance**

**Let all creation dance in energies sublime  
As order turns with chance unfolding space and time  
For nature's art in glory grows and newly shows  
God's mind and heart**

**God's breath each force unfurls Igniting from a spark  
Expanding starry swirls with whirlpools dense and dark  
Though moon and sun seem mindless things  
Each orbit sings Your will be done**

**Our own amazing earth with sunlight cloud and storms  
And life's abundant growth In lovely shapes and forms  
Is made for praise a fragile whole And from its soul  
heav'ns music plays**

**Lift heart and soul and voice, in Christ all praises meet  
And nature shall rejoice as all is made complete  
In hope be strong all life befriend and kindly tend  
creation's song**

### **Notices**

#### **Dismissal**

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## Sermon - Mark 7:1-37 - Clean and Unclean

Today, I want us to think about table manners to help us understand today's reading.

My mum was a stickler for table manners when I was growing up. We had to use the right knife and fork, we couldn't put our knives down and just eat with our forks. Can anyone tell us of particular rules for the dinner table that they had to abide by when they were kids that they thought were strange?

One of the big ones for us had to do with our elbows. Elbows were not to rest on the table, but nor were they to stick out too far, like wings. Apparently our forearms were to be tucked closely to our sides, with our elbows hovering over the edge of the table.

We were told two reasons that this law could never be broken: apparently, someone, somewhere, no one that we knew, lost an eye when the person next to them at the dinner table knocked them with their elbow and they poked themselves in the eye with their knife. We were told we had to keep this rule or we would never get invited to have tea with the queen.

As trite as this rule seems, it does give us 2 ways of thinking about traditions. On the one hand there could be a health or safety aspect. On the other hand there is a relational aspect. We follow the rule to avoid injuring someone, or we follow the rule out of respect for our relationship with someone.

Now with that introduction, let's look at our reading.

### Ritual washing

In the first section, Pharisees and teachers of the law are criticising Jesus because his disciples weren't *"living according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands"*

Particularly since Covid, we all know the importance of washing our hands before we eat. Many faiths also have strict rules about washing before meals, as well as before praying and other religious rituals. In the public service I had some responsibility for prayer rooms in my building. These were particularly used by Islamic staff who prayed at 5 specific times each day, and many would wash before they prayed. It was very much a symbolic washing, and wasn't intended to get themselves physically clean. They would splash a lot of water all over the room, but they themselves didn't get all that wet, or wash very much physical dirt off themselves.

In a similar way, the washing that Pharisees were so particular about wasn't a hygiene issue, but a relational issue. Thus washing was really about being considered clean, or undefiled, before God. There aren't any Old Testament commandments to wash before eating generally, but the tradition had evolved from the commandment that the priests ceremonially wash before entering the temple. They were expected to be ceremonially clean before God so they ceremonially washed. As we read in our reading, it also included the washing of plates,

cups and eating utensils to avoid consuming anything defiled or unclean that would make them ineligible for the temple.

Jesus reminded his listeners that God's commands, which are those found in scripture, are more important than the human traditions that have evolved, like this washing before meals. He doesn't mention which specific commandments he's thinking about here, but I am sure he is thinking about the two great commandments - loving God and loving your neighbour. We are commanded to love God, and this is far more important than the human tradition of washing before meals.

Jesus also understood, as should have the Pharisees, that it wasn't physical cleanness, or freedom from physical dirt that God is concerned about. God is concerned about moral dirt, or sin. He is more worried about your heart than your hands and face. The true cleanliness that God is looking for is not visible on the outside, but it seems that was all the Pharisees were concerned about.

### **Honouring parents**

Jesus then rebuffs the Pharisees' criticisms by comparing their obedience of the 5th commandment, to honour your parents, with their tradition of Corban. Obviously, as one of the 10 commandments, honouring your parents should override any human tradition. However, the Pharisees developed a tradition that did precisely that. Before pensions, an important way children honoured their parents was by financially caring for them when they were too old to earn their own living to care for themselves. However the Pharisees developed a pious sounding cop-out where they said they devoted their spare cash to God, and claimed this prevented them supporting their parents. It sounds very religious, but Jesus saw it for exactly what it was, a tradition overriding a commandment, and a way for them to avoid their responsibilities. It may have sounded good, but it harmed their relationship with their parents and ignored the 5th commandment.

### **The Syrophenician Woman's Faith**

The next example we get off dealing with cleanness and uncleanness is the Syrophenician Woman's request that Jesus exorcise a demon from her daughter. Jesus' listeners would have known Jesus should not have been talking to the woman because she was a woman, a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia, and therefore a Gentile, not a Jew. Again, the Pharisees had traditions about Jews avoiding gentiles and women outside the presence of their husbands, as this could make them unclean.

Despite this, you get the impression that Jesus was actually trying to avoid upsetting the Pharisees on this one. Jesus was trying to explain to the woman that his mission was to the Jews first, and only then to the Gentiles, 27 *"First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."* 28 *"Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."* Insults are flying thick and fast here - Jesus compared the woman and her people to dogs, and, as she accepted her comparison to a dog, she refers to his ministry as mere 'crumbs'!



Despite this banter, Jesus demonstrated his love to this neighbour, and 29 *he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."* 30 *She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.* This was despite any Pharisaic human traditions it may have gone against.

### **Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man**

Our final example today is with Jesus dealing with the deaf and mute man. While the man was not technically unclean, his muteness and deafness, like any physical injury or deformity would have excluded him from the temple. Leviticus 21 says: *no one who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. 18 No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; 19 no man with a crippled foot or hand,* (Leviticus 21:16-19)

Jesus also took compassion on this man, and healed him. But did you notice how he did it?

He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!").

In a physical sense, Jesus was making himself unclean from this man. He touched his ears, he spat and he touched his tongue. Just as had touched lepers and been touched by people possessed by demons, he should have become unclean, and yet he did it anyway. That's why he took the man aside, away from the crowd and the prying eyes of the Pharisees. He knew he would be hindered in his ministry if people thought he was unclean.

### **Conclusion**

And, so, today we have three examples of Jesus dealing with uncleanness:

He dealt with ritual washing and the tradition of Corban by emphasising the priority of God's commandments over traditions.

He dealt with a gentile woman by respecting the gratuity she had and healing her daughter, and He dealt with a deaf and mute man by healing his infirmities, even at the risk of himself being seen as unclean.

You may have noticed I haven't really explained what ritual uncleanness is. In verses 15 through 23 where Jesus gives a detailed explanation of it, the ritual defilement that makes you unfit to stand before God.

He says that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them. He was thinking about unclean foods, or what we would call non-kosher foods. He says they don't go into the heart but into the stomach, and then out of the body." Mark, the gospel writer, helpfully makes it absolutely clear that by saying this, "*Jesus declared all foods clean*". Most people take this to mean the the Old Testament food laws do not apply to Christians, which I am sure this is good news to those who like bacon and prawns, or even perhaps eating flying insects that walk on 4 legs!

We are meant from this to understand that the disciples who didn't perform ritual washings, the gentile woman and the man who was deaf and mute were all suffering from things that

went into them, the physical dirt that got on their hands, the ancestry that meant you weren't born into God's people and the disease, or perhaps the genetics that prevented the man from hearing and speaking. In Jesus's understanding, these came from outside the body, and so did not make these people unclean.

On the other hand, Jesus went on to say that what comes out of a person is what defiles them. *21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person.*"

Putting it another way, these are relational matters, evil ways we relate to other people, first with thoughts, then with actions.

First there are greedy, malicious, lewd, envious and arrogant thoughts, then actions follow: folly, deceit, slander, sexual immorality, theft, murder and adultery.

True cleanliness is the absence, or the forgiveness of these evil thoughts and actions. Since all of us have greedy, malicious, lewd, envious and arrogant thoughts, it has to be forgiveness.

As it was with our table manners, these are relational matters. They are thoughts and deeds that, even if unseen, tear apart our relationships with each other and with God. These are the true defilers, the things that make us truly unclean.

These are the things for which Jesus suffered the most horrific defilement possible to save us from. These are the things for which the God of life suffered rejection, persecution, torture and ultimately death on the cross for our sake.

These are the things that can't simply be washed away like dirt from unclean hands. These are the things that need justice, that need someone to take the just punishment for, someone to die in our place that we might be undefiled in God's sight, washed clean by Jesus's blood.

Let's be honest, we all have evil thoughts that sometimes make their way into evil actions. These thoughts and these actions defile us. They make us unclean in the sight of God who is perfectly clean and good. We all need washing to make us clean, and this is what Jesus has done for us - He has died on the cross that we may be washed spotless and undefiled in his blood.

Have you been washed clean in Jesus's blood? Or are you still defiled and unclean in God's sight with the things that come from your hearts? If so, you need to come to Jesus to be made clean.