

JESUS THE KING
Lent Worship Series – Week 3
The Stain
March 24, 2019

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed.

Announcements and Offering

The Problem of Your Heart

Call to Worship:

²¹ *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV)

God clothed Jesus in our sin. He took our penalty, our punishment so that we can get what Revelation 19:7-8 pictures:

⁷ *Let us rejoice and be glad....* ⁸ *Fine linen, bright and clean, is given [to us] to wear.”*

Through Jesus Christ, at infinite cost to himself, God has clothed us in costly clean garments. It cost him his blood. And it is the only thing that can deal with the problem of your heart.

(Jesus the King, p. 91)

SB#509 – O boundless salvation!	TB-506 – My Jesus, I love Thee	HTD2-T3 (4 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#27 – What the Lord Has Done for Me	HC-27	HCD2A-T17
HC#71 – Power in the Blood SB#451 – Would you be free from your burden of sin?	HC-71 TB-945 – Wonder-working power	HCD6-T11 No CD
HC#105 – How Marvelous! SB#466 – I stand amazed in the presence	HC-105 TB-769 – My Savior’s love	HCD9-T15 HTD10-T8 (4 vs.)
HC#161 – My Great Redeemer’s Praise SB#89 – O for a thousand tongues to sing	HC-161 TB-57 – Azmon TB-75 – Grimsby	HCD15-T11 HTD3-T4 (4 vs.) No CD
HC#241 – Crown Him with Many Crowns SB#358 – Crown Him with many crowns,	HC- 241 TB-162 – Diademata	HCD23-T11 HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)

HC#248 – Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)	HC-248	HCD23-T18
HC#255 – Victory in Jesus SB#464 – I heard an old, old story	HC-255 TB-908 – same	HCD24-T15 HTD10-T17 (3 vs.)
HC#266 – This Is Amazing Grace	HC-266	HCD25-T16
SB#167 - Hail Thou once despised Jesus	TB-370 – Hyfrydol	HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) HCD10-T14
SB#168 – Hark! The gospel news is sounding	TB-399 – Cwm Rhondda	HTD3-T7 (4 vs.)
SB#226 – Let us rejoice, the fight is won	TB-43 – St Francis	HTD2-T15 (3 vs.)
SB#231 – Praise Him! Praise Him!	TB-799 – same	HTD6-T15 (3 vs.)
SB#241 - And can it be that I should gain	TB-445 – Sagina	HTD4-T13 (4 vs.)
SB#242 – Arise, my soul, arise	TB-200 – Darwalls	HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)
SB#271 – Rejoice, the Lord is king!	TB-200 – Darwalls	HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)
SB#411 – Come in, my Lord, come in	TB-162 – Diademata	HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)
SB#421 – Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?	TB-557 – Are you washed?	HTD7-T2 (3 vs.)
SB#468 – Love divine, from Jesus flowing	TB-404 – Love Divine	No CD

Testimony of Faith – His Stain [Choose someone from the congregation who can testify on this theme.]

Outside-In Cleansing

Responsive Reading:

Leader: Jesus’s conflict with the religious leaders of his day did not stop. Mark relates an incident in which Jesus and these leaders were disagreeing about the cleanliness laws, the dietary laws, the regulations that had to do with ritual purity. It would be easy to assume that the controversy over such laws is surely not relevant to us today. But actually it takes up matters that are profoundly relevant for human life in any culture, any century. Here’s what happened:

Women: *¹The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus ²and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were “unclean,” that is, unwashed.*

Leader: *³(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴When 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.)*

Men: ⁵ 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?” (Mark 7:1-5, NIV)

Leader: Jesus couldn’t have agreed more with the religious leaders of his day about the fact that we are unclean before God, unfit for the presence of God. But he disagreed with them about the source of the uncleanness, and about how to address it. Mark records:

All: ¹⁴ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” (Mark 7:14-15, NIV)

Leader: According to Jesus, in our natural state we’re unfit for the presence of God. Jesus shows us why we can’t shake that sense of uncleanness. The story continues:

All: ¹⁷ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸ “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? ¹⁹ 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. (Mark 7:17-19, NIV)

Leader: Jesus’s language is quite graphic here: Whether you eat clean or unclean food it goes into the mouth, down to the stomach, and then (literally) out into the latrine. It never gets to the heart. Nothing that comes in from the outside makes us unclean.

All: ²⁰ He went on: “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.” (Mark 7:20-23, NIV)

Leader: What’s really wrong with the world? Why can the world be such a miserable place? Why is there so much strife between nations, races, tribes, classes? Why do relationships tend to fray and fall apart? Jesus is saying: *We are what’s wrong.* It’s what comes from the inside. It’s the self-centeredness of the human heart. It’s sin. In fact, these evils that come from the heart make us so unclean that Jesus later tells the disciples:

Men: ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.

Women: ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.

All: ⁴⁷ *And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell,* ⁴⁸ *where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*
(Mark 9:43-48, NIV)

Leader: Sinful behavior and sinful desires are like a fire. It can't be allowed to smolder. It will overtake you eventually. Sin is the same way: It never stays in one place. It always leads to separation from God, which results in intense suffering, first in this life and then in the next. The Bible calls that hell. That's why Jesus uses the drastic image of amputation. There can be no compromises. We must do anything we can to avoid it. But Jesus has just pointed out that our biggest problem, the thing that makes us most unclean, is not our foot or our eye; it's our heart. But we can't cut out our heart. No matter what we do, or how hard we try, external solutions don't deal with the soul.

(Jesus the King, pp. 75-82)

HC#102 – Whiter Than the Snow SB#736 – Tell me what to do to be pure	HC-102 TB-932 – same	HCD9-T12 HTD9-T19 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#29 – Psalm 103	HC-29	HCD2A-T19
HC#89 – Knowing You SB#565 – All I once held dear,	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19 No CD
HC#164 – Before the Throne of God Above SB#243 – Before the throne of God above	HC-164 TB-52 – same	HCD15-T14 No CD
HC#234 – Beneath the Cross	HC-234	HCD22-T14
SB#161 – Beneath the cross of Jesus	TB-574 – Beneath the cross	No CD
HC#245 – Known to You	HC-245	HCD23-T15
HC#253 – Jesus Paid It All	HC-253	HCD24-T13
HC#258 – He Sought Me SB#895 – The Savior sought and found me	HC-258 TB-783 – O what a wonderful day	HCD24-T18 HTD10-T10 (3 vs.)
SB#178 – Jesus, keep me near the cross	TB-238 – Near the cross TB-237 – Healing Stream	HTD2-T5 (3 vs.) HTD5-T8 (3 vs.)
SB#179 – King of my life, I crown Thee now	TB-89 – Lead me to Calvary	HTD9-T8 (4 vs.)

HC#205 – Closer Still	HC-205	HCD19-T15
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
HC#160 – I Surrender	HC-160	HCD14-T20

HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376 – King of kings, majesty	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19 No CD
HC#258 – He Sought Me SB#895 – The Savior sought and found me	HC-258 TB-783 – O what a wonderful day	HCD24-T18 HTD10-T10 (3 vs.)
SB#222 – He is Lord, He is Lord	TB-649 – same	HPC1-T13/14

Pastoral Prayer

Drama: That Will Leave a Mark

[Transition from drama]

Jesus paid it all;
All to him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow.

(Words by Elvina M. Hall)

HC#253 – Jesus Paid It All	HC-253	HCD24-T13
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Prayers of Confession [Silent prayers]

Inside-Out Cleansing

Message – The Stain

HC#98 – Nothing But Thy Blood	HC-98	HCD8-T18
SB#769 – Jesus, see me at Thy feet	TB-289 – Nothing but Thy blood	HTD11-T7 (4 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#12 – Lord, Make Calvary Real to Me SB#182 – Lord, make Calvary real to me	HC-12 TB-741 – same	HCD1B-T12 No CD
HC#77 – Change My Heart, O God SB#409 – Change my heart, O God	HC-77 TB-584 – same	HCD6-T17 No CD
HC#89 – Knowing You SB#565 – All I once held dear	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19 No CD
HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439 – There is a message	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19 No CD
HC#160 – I Surrender	HC-160	HCD14-T20
HC#164 – Before the Throne of God Above SB#243 – Before the throne of God above	HC-164 TB-52 – same	HCD15-T14 No CD
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-197	HCD17-17

HC#189 – Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing SB#830 – Come, Thou fount of every blessing	HC-189 TB-374 – Nettleton	HCD17-T19 No CD
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376 – King of kings, majesty	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19 No CD
HC#249 – Near to the Heart of God	HC-249	HCD23-T19
HC#253 – Jesus Paid It All	HC-253	HCD24-T13
HC#256 – At Your Mercy Seat	HC-256	HCD24-T16
HC#258 – He Sought Me SB#895 – The Savior sought and found me	HC-258 TB-783 – O what a wonderful day	HCD24-T18 No CD
SB#178 – Jesus keep me near the cross	TB-238 – Near the cross TB-237 – Healing Stream	HTD2-T5 (3 vs.) HTD5-T8 (3 vs.)
SB#179 – King of my life, I crown Thee now	TB-89 – Lead me to Calvary	HTD9-T8 (4 vs.)
SB#591 – I would be Thy holy temple	TB-411 – Showers of blessing	HTD7-T17 (3 vs.)

Benediction:

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

(Hebrews 13:20-21, NIV)

SB#923 – God is with us	TB-394 – Austria	HTD1-T2 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#161 – My Great Redeemer’s raise SB#89 – O for a thousand tongues to sing	HC-161 TB-59 – Azmon TB-89 – Grimsby	HCD15-T11 HTD3-T4 (4 vs.) No CD
HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King	HC-209	HCD19-T19
SB#271 – Rejoice, the Lord is king!	TB-200 – Darwalls	HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)

Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God by Timothy Keller, 2013; previously published as *King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus*, 2011 (Penguin Books).

Lent 2019 Week #3	
DRAMA	
That Will Leave a Mark	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
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Topic:	Sin
Scripture:	Mark 7:1-23
Synopsis:	A woman tries to clean a grape juice spill out of her carpet.
Characters:	Rita Becky
Props/Costumes:	Casual dress. A small area rug. A small footstool, table, or chair.
Setting:	Rita's living room. An area rug is off to the side and a small footstool is nearby.
Running time:	4 minutes

[*Rita is pacing nervously.*]

Becky: [*enters quickly*] I got here as quickly as possible. What's wrong?

Rita: [*points to carpet at her feet*] This.

Becky: [*scrunching face*] Ooh! Is that . . . ?

Rita: [*nodding her head*] Yep. Grape juice.

Rita: That's not good.

Becky: I know. And Rick is bringing his boss home for dinner tonight.

Becky: [*excited*] We'd better get to work quickly.

Rita: I already tried to get it out.

Becky: Did you blot it?

Rita: Yes.

Becky: [*questioning*] Blotted, not rubbed?

Rita: [*a bit annoyed*] Yes. What do you think I am, a rookie?

Becky: Just checking. Do you have any lemon juice?

Rita: Yep. I already tried that.

Becky: What about a little vinegar?

Rita: Can't you smell it?

Becky: [*sniffing, turning head away*] Yes. Yes I can.

Rita: It's hopeless.

Becky: Let me think. [*pause*] What about club soda?

Rita: How can you be thinking about something to drink at a time like this?

Becky: No. I meant for the carpet.

Rita: [*realizing*] Oh yeah.

Becky: Good.

Rita: I mean, no.

Becky: What? Which is it?

Rita: Yes, club soda would be good and no, I don't have any.

Becky: Have you tried anything else?

Rita: Well, I read on-line that ammonia works.

Becky: And?

Rita: It didn't.

Becky: I've also heard that salt might help.

Rita: It doesn't.

Becky: That doesn't leave us many options! What time is Rick getting home with his boss?

Rita: 5 or 6.

Becky: O'clock?

Rita: [*matter-of-factly*] Minutes.

Becky: [*looking around*] What about . . . [*moves toward rug*]

Rita: [alarmed] No, don't move that!

Becky: [picks up rug, gasps] What happened here?

Rita: [sighing, putting head down] Spaghetti last night.

Becky: [puts rug back down] Did you blot it?

Rita: [shakes her head]

Becky: It may be time to call the professionals.

Rita: But I don't have time. Rick will be here any minute.

Becky: [looks around, moves footstool over the stain] Voila!

Rita: But that looks out of place.

Becky: And a grape juice stain doesn't?

Rita: On second thought, it does add a bit of feng shui.

Becky: I think I just heard a car door. Let me know how it goes. [exits]

Rita: [calling after her] Okay, I will. And on your way out, don't look under the welcome mat by the front door. Rick may have spilled some Chinese food last week.

[Blackout]

**Optional segue*

Jesus paid it all;
All to him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow.

(Words by Elvina M. Hall)

JESUS THE KING:
Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God
Lent Sermon – Week 3
The Stain
March 24, 2019

Title: The Stain

Scripture: Mark 7:1-5, 14-23

***Jesus the King* (Keller, 2011): Chapter 7**

The six weeks of Lent have historically been set aside on the Church calendar as a period of taking a serious personal inventory through intense introspection. As an aid to the inward look, the Church included fasting during Lent. There can be a strong link forged between fasting and introspection. The Biblical pattern for Lent comes from Jesus' 40 days of fasting and praying in the wilderness at the very beginning of his ministry. Many find great spiritual benefit and accelerated spiritual growth during Lent as they follow Jesus' example, charting a new path through the wilderness of their own soul.

Somewhere along the way, the idea of fasting morphed into the idea of "giving up" something for Lent. Some of the more common items "given up" are chocolate, \$5.00 cups of coffee from your favorite coffee shop, Facebook, television and the internet. For six weeks, people "tough it out," only to take these things right back up again with a flourish on Easter Sunday exclaiming, "I can't believe I made it!" This expression of fasting may have some lasting effect on the person. And, I wonder! Could this Lenten observance be form without substance?

Our Scripture text from Mark 7 will help us continue to expand on the idea of how we attempt to draw closer to God. What is effective? What is just show? These questions have shaped discussions of spiritual practice even before Jesus' day. In many ways, we seem to be no further ahead in living out the answer to these questions than those who walked with Jesus.

In order to gain the most out of this passage, we need to do some **historic digging** into the religious practices of the Jews in Jesus' day. Without looking at the passage from first century eyes, we will not understand the argument the Pharisees and teachers of the law had with Jesus. We find the disagreement raised by the religious leaders against Jesus' disciples and some historic notations by Mark in the opening verses of our text:

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus ² and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ 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.)

⁵ 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?" (Mark 7:1-5, NIV)

Seriously? Washing your hands before you eat? Every preschooler learns this basic rule of personal hygiene. What causes this to become such a heated spiritual debate? As we think together today, we will follow Jesus in uncovering the heart of the issue.

[*The two-point outline is Keller's in chapter 7, with only slight modification.*]

I. The Pharisees' remedy—cleansing from the outside-in.

The Pharisees and teachers of the law were the members of the religious community tasked with helping people live their lives so that they would be acceptable to God. Only those who were clean could worship God. Therefore, they set about to teach and explain what was and was not "clean" behavior. It resulted in strenuously following seemingly endless rules so that you could be acceptable to God. That's a one cup answer to a five pound bag of history!

William Barclay in his commentary (*Mark*, 1956, 167) describes in detail the Jewish tradition of handwashing in Jesus' day. You will see that it was quite a ritual! Handwashing occurred before every meal as well as in between each course of a meal to insure a person's purity. To begin, there could be no clinging debris on one's hands prior to washing; it had to be rubbed off. Water from a pure, clean source and kept only for washing was then poured over the hands with fingertips raised upward. The water had to run down at least to the wrists. In their recipe, the least amount of water necessary was 1½ eggshells worth. Wet hands were then scrubbed one at a time by using the opposite fist in each palm. To finish the washing, water was again poured over the hands, this time from the wrist with fingers pointing down. Your hands were now clean. Barclay cautions, ". . . to fail to do this was in Jewish eyes, not to be guilty of bad manners, not to be dirty in the health sense, *but to be unclean in the sight of God*" (emphasis added, 167).

Do you see the battle lines drawn between the teachers of the law and Jesus? Why is He allowing His disciples to act in this way? Doesn't Jesus agree that only pure, holy people can be in the presence of God? As we look closely at Jesus' response to the rebuke of the teachers of the law, we discover that Jesus agrees with the basic issue of the need for purity before God, but sharply disagrees with the source of the problem as well as its remedy.

Within Jewish law, spelled out in the book of Leviticus, chapters 11-18, there are many ways a person could become unclean. A short list includes eating forbidden food, having a rash or skin disease break out on your body, touching anything dead and contact with mold or mildew. Transfer of uncleanness could be person to person, on dishes or food containers, on clothing or even the walls of houses. All one needed to do was to touch an unclean item to become personally unclean.

For each type of infraction, a cleansing and a sacrificial offering are required to restore a person to cleanness. The Temple altar was the place of restoration and wholeness. The sacrificial offerings presented were endless, because people could not keep themselves clean. To be in a state of uncleanness meant exclusion from the ability to worship. Inattention to the rules stained one's inner conscience, and only reinforced and strengthened the barrier between the worshipper and God. (Garland, from Linders, footnote 7, 273).

As Israel spread out over the Promised Land, it became difficult to keep the required sacrifices in order to maintain purity before God. There was also the problem of Israel's neighbors bringing with them practices that led to further impurity. In their humanness, the teachers of the law began to expound endlessly on exactly what must be done to maintain a holy relationship with God. The result was an emphasis on external rules and regulations. The focus became what one needed to do externally in order to be right. The frustrating challenge was that people never seemed to be externally right.

Let's move back to Mark's Gospel, and pick up where we left off. Jesus is now speaking:

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:
 'These people honor me with their lips,
 but their hearts are far from me.
 ⁷ They worship me in vain;
 their teachings are merely human rules.'
⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions."
(Mark 7:6-7, NIV)

Jesus' response to the religious leaders sharply changes the focus and direction of the argument. He does not debate whether handwashing before eating is good or bad. He does not defend his disciples. He bluntly focuses the conversation on their rule keeping which has caused them to become hypocrites. They falsely claim to be representatives of God's instruction, and instead create more and more nitpicking rules, human traditions and systems to approach God. Jesus casts a floodlight on their misdirected and misleading teaching.

Jesus' final response to the religious teachers and those who have crowded in around them to witness the fight is blunt:

Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them" (Mark 7:14-15, NIV).

II. Jesus' remedy—cleansing from the inside out.

While this is the end of the debate with the religious leaders, it is the very beginning of our understanding of Jesus' remedy. While the religious leaders wrote rules focusing on what people could do to maintain personal purity so that they could come near God, Jesus indicates that the problem is not external, but internal. A far deeper stain exists in the relationship between God and man. The stained heart in need of cleansing is far more critical to God. The necessary cleansing is not from the outside in, but instead from the inside out.

As on many other occasions, the disciples nod vigorously at Jesus' public pronouncement while all the while are left scratching their heads, trying to understand. They know this is an important moment, but they just don't get it. Privately, they summon the courage to ask him for further clarification, and are met with Jesus' frustration at their lack of understanding. Again, we pick up our text, beginning at verse 18:

“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? ¹⁹ 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.)

²⁰ He went on: “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.”
(Mark 7:18-23, NIV)

Did you just feel an arrow hitting a target? That’s the way I feel when I read these words. Jesus’ words are the direct hit of an arrow at the very center of my heart. Bullseye! My unwashed hands are not a problem to God, but my deeply stained heart surely is!

David Garland writes, “Jesus is concerned about internal impurity that one cannot wash away by washing the hands. They [the disciples] do not understand that true holiness that imitates God and opens one up to God is something internal” (275). Garland continues, “The only defilement that the disciples need worry about has to do with the heart, not the hands, with evil thoughts that leak out from within a person, not food that ends up in the latrine. What does not enter the heart does not make a person unclean. The heart is the core of motivation, deliberation and intention” (276).

I wonder if the disciples recalled the thunder of Jeremiah’s words, as I do when Jesus’ words sink deeply and incriminatingly into my soul. “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it” (Jeremiah 17:9, NIV)?

Throughout Scripture, the word “heart” often carries a specialized meaning. When not referring to the organ tasked with pumping blood throughout your body, the word “heart” refers to who you are at your truest level—who and what you essentially are. The clearest indicator of who you really are flows from your behavior (Brower, 198).

Jesus’ listing of the heart’s characteristics which keep us from active fellowship with God are incriminating. As you listen again to Jesus’ list, is your conscience pricked by the Holy Spirit at the mention of any of these characteristics: sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly?
We often sing these words:

What can wash away my sin?
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can keep me always clean?
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

*O precious is the flow
 That makes me white as snow!
No other fount I know,
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

(*The Song Book of The Salvation Army*, 2016, song 526)

We cannot cleanse our stained and deceitful heart by scrubbing with any amount of soap and water. There is absolutely nothing we can do from the outside to effect a cure. Only the death of Jesus produces the cure for our sin stained heart. His death is only made effective in our life when we humbly confess our sinfulness and ask His forgiveness and cleansing. When we do so, God cleanses and changes our heart. Day by day and moment by moment, for the rest of our earthly life, we allow God to keep changing us from the inside out. This is the essence of holiness.

Washing your hands is a comfortable practice. We do it without much thought, many times a day. Allowing God to cleanse us from the inside out by addressing the nature of our heart is not so easy or comfortable. Heart cleansing is only accomplished through humility of spirit, repentance and closely following the Spirit of God as He reshapes and re-creates us from the inside out.

Does your heart need God's cleansing today? Have Jesus' words hit the bullseye of your heart? As we take time to meditate and reflect on what God is saying to us individually, the altar—a place of prayer and commitment—is available for you to come and speak with God. Think and pray carefully, allowing God to examine your heart. Respond to whatever He shows you with humility and sincerity.

Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God by Timothy Keller, 2013; previously published as *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus*, 2011 (Penguin Books).