**What goes *into* a person's mouth does not make him unclean. But what comes *out* of a person's mouth makes him unclean.** (Mark 7.15)

If you have ever got unexpectedly muddy you will know these events do not matter so much; they might make you feel silly, but they do not change you on the inside except perhaps making you more cautious. We are very used to washing hands after going to the toilet, working in the garden, decorating, etc, but again none of these affect our internal character. TEXT.

Jesus is commenting on the ritual laws of his day. The Jewish Law required people to wash their hands after being impure before becoming pure again, having been touched by an impure person, or before priests did their work in the Temple. In Jesus’ day Mark tells us about washing before eating, and washing pots, and food from a market. Of course, being ritual does not mean it has no practical use as well. These laws are almost certainly very sensible, and we do many ourselves today without thinking they have any connection with religious ritual.

When it comes to Covid-19, we don’t think washing hands, using sanitiser, or wearing masks, are religious rituals. We do this to help prevent us catching Covid-19, or anything else, from others.

Jesus’ comments are not about hygiene. They are partly to counter the idea that doing these is all that matters to God. One of the greatest developments traced through the OT is the switch of focus from ritual laws to moral laws. This is what the prophets of old often pointed out, eg Micah 6.6-8.

Jesus agrees by pointing out that what does matter to God is purity of heart, not purity of ritual. TEXT.

Jesus lists (v21-23): **from a person’s heart come the evil things which lead him to do immoral things, to rob, kill, commit adultery, be greedy, and do all sorts of evil things: deceit, indecency, jealousy, slander, pride, folly – all these evil things come from inside a person and make him unclean**.

Cf Galatians 5.19-21: **immoral, filthy, and indecent actions; in worship of idols, and witchcraft. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry and ambitious. They separate into parties and groups; they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these.**

Colossians 3.5, 8-9: **such as sexual immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions and greed… anger, passion, and hateful feelings. No insults or obscene talk … Do not lie to one another.**

Jesus has come to deal with disease, pandemic, etc, but the deeper problems of the human heart which can’t be dealt with by force or laws. Whilst the pandemic is a problem for us, needing careful community co-operation to deal with, there is a longer-term problem that we should not avoid dealing with – the innate selfishness of humanity. And this begins with us – no point showing others their selfishness if we do not deal with our own – remember the parable of Jesus: **How dare you say to your brother, “Please, let me take that speck out of your eye,’ when you have a log in your own eye?** (Matthew 7.4).

And this cleansing is not something we can do for ourselves, unlike getting muddy in a physical way – we need to ask God to help us.