**I Will Cleanse You from All Your Impurities**

**The Word**

Read Together Ezekiel 36:22-28

**The Big Picture**

Ezekiel 36 captures the heart of the gospel as God promises to wash his people clean (fulfilled in the forgiveness we receive through the death of Christ) and give them new hearts (fulfilled in the coming of the Spirit into God’s new covenant people). The gospel is God-centered from start to finish, and when we experience it, it leaves us humbled, grateful, and totally centered on God.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Imagine if, prior to Sunday’s message, someone had walked up to you on the street and asked you, “what is the gospel?” How would you have answered that question? What would you have said that was not in Sunday’s message, and what would you have left out that was in Sunday’s message?

2. Consider the differences noted between the gospel and religion. Where do you find yourself falling into a religious life rather than living within the gospel?

3. Consider the metaphor of forgiveness as being washed clean by God? Did you need to hear that in a personal way on Sunday? If not, can you remember a time where that reality really impacted you?

4. If God is the one who has to change our hearts through his Spirit, then where does that leave us in terms of working on our own hearts? Practically speaking, how do we go about the work of transformation and growth in our lives if God is the one who does the transforming?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. The gospel vs. religion

A. Religion is humanity’s attempt to bridge the gap to God through various strategies (Morality, ritual and ceremony, spiritual experience, theological rightness, etc.). Religion results in lives that vacillate between pride and guilt/anxiety.

B. The Gospel is what God has done to bridge the gap with humanity through sending his Son and Spirit. The gospel results in lives that are grateful, humble, and free.

II. God’s two great promises in Ezekiel 36

A. He promises to wash them clean of all their impurities (v. 25)

1. Israel stood before God covered in moral dirt and filth and desperately needed to be washed/forgiven

 2. We all stand before God dirty and stained by sin

 a. Religion says: “you’ve got to clean yourself up before God.”

 b. In the gospel God says, “I will wash you and you will be clean”

 3. God’s promise to wash us is fulfilled with the sending of his Son, Jesus

 a. Jesus lives a perfect life

 b. Jesus takes on himself all our moral dirt on the cross

c. Through faith in him, we are washed clean and made righteous in God’s sight (2 Cor 5:21)

 B. He promises to give them new hearts (v. 26-27)

 1. He promises nothing short of a heart transplant (v. 26)

2. This is only done by the coming of his Spirit to dwell within the hearts of his people so that the law which was always external becomes internal.

a. God had commanded them to change their hearts (see Ezekiel 18:31 and Deuteronomy 10:16

b. But ultimately Israel simply couldn’t do it, so God promised to change their hearts himself (Ezekiel 36:26, Deuteronomy 30:5-6)

3. God’s promise to give new hearts is fulfilled in the sending of his Spirit at Pentecost

 C. These two promises together define what it means to be “born again” (John 3)

= To be “born of water and the Spirit” (3:5) (to be washed clean/forgiven and given a new heart)

III. Notice this is God’s doing from start to finish

 A. “I will wash you, I will give you a new heart, I will put my Spirit in you”

 B. “It is not for your sake that I’m doing this, but for the sake of my name (v. 22)

 C. Consider Ephesians 2:8-10