

Mark
Chapter 7:1-37
“Just Jesus”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Teaching: The popularity of Jesus Christ is soaring. Some of it was for the right reason, but much of it was for temporal gain (they wanted a physical healing or a free meal, but they weren't inviting Him to be their Lord and Savior).

None the less, great things have been taking place. People have been getting saved and healed and fed and powerful discipleship ministry has been taking place.

But anytime someone's popularity increases ... so will the jealousy of others. Which brings us to ...

Verses 1-4: Whenever great ministry begins to take place ... the critics will come ... in this case ... from Jerusalem.

But as serious as this is - it's hard not to get a chuckle out of these **first few verses**. These Pharisees had traveled some 70 miles (about a one week journey the way they travelled), to spy on the Lord and the most that they can find to accuse Him of is "Your disciples don't wash their hands before they eat".

But their accusation is, actually not speaking of personal hygiene at all, but rather of the traditions of the Rabbis.

Now it would help if we all had a basic familiarity with the three primary books of Judaism. The Tanakh, the Torah and the Talmud.

The **Tanakh** is the word used for the Hebrew Bible which is the same as the Old Testament of our Bibles ... only the books are in a different order.

The **Torah** is the word used specifically for the Law of God as it's presented in the Bible ... specifically the first five books of the Bible.

And the **Talmud** (which is what this passage references) is actually two books pressed into one; the Mishnah and the Gemara.

The **Mishnah** is the collection of rules set forth by the ancient rabbis and the **Gemara** is a discussion or commentary on those rules. For those of you who are interested, you can access an online copy of these writings at ...

Or you can talk to Gene about them as he's studied this quite a lot.

But back to the text ... this issue of washing hands is only an example of the overall problem, but a very representative one. Because in the Torah (**Lev 22:4**), God's law says that the priests needed to wash their hands before they ate, but it says absolutely nothing of anyone else being required to do this.

Which is where the Talmud (the writings of man ... not God), picks up. These traditions required an extensive ritual prior to eating for everyone. They were to pour one eggshell full of water on each hand and it had to run from their wrists to their fingertips and so on and so on and so on.

They had added a plethora of man-made traditions and falsely called it God's Law.

And as I said, hand washing is only an example. They had similar rules for their cooking pots and other utensils.

Q. Because a fly could have landed on that pot and what if that fly had previously landed on a Gentile's shoulder or something (Gentile, of course, being a reference to any non-Jew)?

If you had a clay pitcher and the inside of that pitcher somehow became defiled ... then it had to be broken into pieces small enough that no shard of it could ever be used again.

The Talmud also forbid worshipping in the Temple if a person had touched any dead thing (even an insect) - again a man-made addition to **Leviticus 22**.

They were forbidden to enter the Temple if they had become "unclean", by contact with a Gentile. This could be as simple as walking down a dusty road behind a Gentile and having some of the dust that the Gentile stirred up settle on them. Man-made ... not God directed!

Very literally, the Pharisees, through their extravagant additions to God's Law were preventing people from worshipping God in the Temple.

A modern day example would be a church dress code. Man-made ... not God directed!

Just lots and lots of such rules ... not a part of God's Law, but handed down by the rabbis as heavy burdens upon the people.

Man-made doctrines are dangerous things. They separate people ... puff some up and cut some down, but all in all they separate ... they exclude and divide. Man-made doctrines have been the primary source of church divisions and new denominations for 2,000 years.

But the simple gospel of Jesus Christ is the divine bulldozer. It levels the playing field. We are all sinners who stand in need of the same, willing Savior.

There is a story that's told of a soldier many years ago in France who died in battle. And his two friends wanted to give him a proper burial so they took his body to the nearest town and found there a Catholic church with a cemetery. They went in and asked the priest for permission to bury their fallen comrade in the cemetery. The priest said "Well, was he catholic?" "Well no, he was protestant, but he loved the Lord and he died honorably ... in defense of his country." "I'm sorry", the priest said, "only Catholics can be buried in this cemetery." The two young men pleaded with the priest, but he would not bend "I'm sorry ... it's not my rule, but I must enforce it" he said.

So they decided to bury their friend just outside the fence of that cemetery. They dug the hole, placed their friend in it and marked it with a small stone. The next morning, as they were preparing to head back to the front lines, they went by to pay their last respects to their friend, but to their amazement they couldn't find his grave. They went to the priest and explained how they had buried their friend just outside the cemetery fence, but that now they couldn't find the grave.

"I know" said the priest, "Last night after you left, the Lord spoke to me. I couldn't sleep after telling you what I told you so I got up and moved the fence. Your friends grave is now a part of the cemetery."

Man-made rules and standards put up fences to exclude people, but Jesus is moves fences every day.

Verses 5-8: Oh ... here we go again!

Q. Doesn't Jesus know that He's not gonna make friends this way?

He calls these religious guys ... hypocrites. In the Greek it's hupokrites (hoop-ok-ree-tace') ... it means to be an actor or to play a role.

Jesus is saying to these religious people ... you're not real. You're just pretending to be something that you're not. They were wearing masks ... religious masks.

Q. You remember all the masks that people wore in high school? – Well perhaps the only place with more masks ... is the church. Twenty-one times, just in the **Gospel of Mark**, Jesus blasts the religious people by calling them actors.

And going from being a religious actor to a born again believer is one of the most difficult things a man can do. That's why Satan loves it so much when he can get you into the religious actor mold and that's why God hates it so much.

Hell will be packed full of religious actors who never actually gave themselves to Christ,

but had everyone around them convinced that they had.

Jesus convicts these people of thinking that they were more pleasing to God based on the fact that they kept more rules ... man-made rules.

Silly, but oh how quickly the traditions of man can become the doctrines and dogmas of the church.

Jesus said ...

John 8:36 “... if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

But the traditions of man are anything but freeing. They will put you on the fast track to being bound up and enslaved ... just the opposite of what Jesus came and died to do.

Q. Now ... does this mean that all traditions are wrong then? – Not at all. But what it does mean is that it is very wrong to pass off traditions (whether in the church or within a family) ... it is very wrong to pass off traditions as if they were God’s Law and it is equally wrong to burden people into conformity with traditions (whether that’s in the church or within a family).

Over and over again throughout the gospels, we are reminded that the real issue is the heart. It’s not about the externals like the Talmud required - it’s about the inward. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the genuine relationship with Christ in the very depths of our hearts. If that’s the source of the externals wonderful, but if the externals are from any other source or for any other reason, then, as Paul said; it’s worthless and just “**sounding brass**“ (1 Cor 13:1). It’s just noise and acting.

And to be sure ... the danger for us is when we just look back and shake our finger at the saints that have gone before us for the burdens of tradition that they’ve placed on the people of the church:

- 1.** Coat and tie
- 2.** King James Only
- 3.** Infant Baptism
- 4.** Pipe organs and hymns

The list goes on and on ...

Q. But in the same way that the stringent propagation of those things has hindered the work of God ... what about us? -- Are we gonna be just as guilty and turn people off in the same way by telling them that they gotta worship with a guitar and wear Hawaiian shirts? – Oh God help us!

If the Lord carries ... we will pass this work onto the next generation, but if all we pass on is a method or a system ... they will see right through that and the work of God will once

again suffer. We have to pass on Jesus and His Word ... not a system or even a church.

Pastor Chuck Smith gives this warning on the subject ...

Every new and great movement of God is born of the Spirit. When we examine church history and the various great movements of God, we discover they were all born in the Spirit. Yet such moves of God historically seem to move from that birth in the Spirit to ultimately seeking to be perfected in the flesh. This seems to be a continual cycle in the history of the church. Movements that were once alive in the Spirit become dead in ritualism.

Ritualism is nothing more than a rut, and the only difference between a rut and a grave is the length and the depth. We see the energies of the church expended in life-support systems designed to keep a corpse still gasping for breath. The whole purpose seems to be concentrated in not letting the movement die.

We must remember that it is God's work, not ours, so it must go as He wills. Our desires are totally irrelevant.

Verses 9-13: Corban was a legal maneuver. The word simply means “gift”, but the religious people had figured out a way to use it for their personal benefit at the expense of others and in violation of the heart and Law of God.

So this was a very convenient, but absolutely ungodly traditional rule of man.

See the religious leaders knew that many people set money aside on regular basis to help care for their parents as they aged because that was, and is, a part of God's Law.

But this rule of Corban gave the Temple a way to tap into more money ... and the people went for it because it allowed them to escape their responsibilities.

Corban was any possession (stuff or money), that was willed and obligated to the Temple. In other words -- anything that could be possessed could be dedicated as corban. That meant that whoever owned it could keep it and continue to enjoy it until they died, but once they died -- that possession became Temple property.

The problem that was created by this little, man-made twist, was that when old mom and dad came to their son for help -- the son couldn't help, because all he owned was “corban” and couldn't be given away. It “belonged to the Lord”.

So Jesus once again responds to their accusation by condemning their man-made law.

Psalm 19 tells us that God's law is perfect ... it's complete. It didn't need the Pharisee's help and may we remember that it doesn't need ours either.

Verses 14-16: So Jesus now turns His attention away from the religious leaders and calls the people to gather around Him ... and He tells them to listen and to understand.

For those of you who've been with us for our Wednesday night studies in the Old Testament, you know that, among many other foods, it was forbidden for a Jew to eat pork.

And this was a Law that was quite stringently adhered to. In fact, during the time of the Maccabees, under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes ... a decree was sent out with the penalty of death that everyone had to eat pork. Those who refused would be put to death and thousands chose death over defiling themselves with pork.

So ... with that in the background ... you can understand just how radical Jesus' statement was here; "Nothing that you might eat defiles you, but what you say ... that's what defiles a man (or more accurately stated, "what a man says is what proves whether or not he is defiled because sooner or later ... our words give away what's hiding in our heart")."

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount;

Matt 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

But the religious leaders of Christ's day said "No ... blessed are the pure in stomach and of clean hands". As Jesus quoted from Isaiah ...

Mark 7:6 ... 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

Verse 17: They had to wait till all the people were gone so they wouldn't look like imbeciles.

Verses 18-23: Put whatever you want in your mouth -- it will not affect your spiritual heart. But, what's in your heart will come out through your mouth. We may be able to hide it and suppress it for a time, but it will come out.

Maybe when we're under stress. Maybe when we think no one is looking. Maybe when we're with a crowd that expects us to be like them. Maybe at some other time, but it will come out.

Verse 24: So Jesus leaves the area of Galilee now and heading northwest, He enters the region of Phoenicia ... which was Gentile territory on the Mediterranean Coast.

Verse 25-27: Man He's never gonna win an election if He keeps saying things like this!

This woman was Syrophenician (meaning that she was Phoenician by blood, but living in Syria) ... she was a Gentile ... a non-Jew, but she was desperate. She loved her daughter and her daughter was in real trouble. So she comes to Jesus for help.

Q. But what are we to make of the Lord's response to her? – A couple of things that I want you to see:

1. Take note that He definitely indicates that everyone who comes hungry will be fed, but He also makes it clear that He came to feed the children of Israel first (**Verse 27**).

Jesus' ministry of that time was to the Jews. It's not that the Gentiles were, or are, second class citizens, but that their time had not yet come.

Paul said;

Rom 1:16 ... I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Or if you prefer, you can read Jesus' explanation of this in parable form in **Matthew 22:1-14**.

2. We need to understand what it was the Jesus was really saying when he called her a "dog", because to think that Jesus would refer to this heart-broken woman in such a derogatory way is disturbing.

The New Testament was, we all know, written in Greek and the Old Testament in Hebrew ...

Q. But anyone remember what language was spoken in Israel at Christ's time? – Aramaic for the most part.

In the Hebrew and Aramaic languages there is no such thing as a curse word. In fact when a Jew wants to curse, even today, they use English curse words. Apparently we just have better curse words than all the other languages do. But there are no curse words in the Hebrew or Aramaic.

In the Lord's day about the worst thing you could call someone was a kuon (koo'-ohn) a dog. "Dog" kuon (koo'-ohn), was used in a very derogatory way, because it described the wild, mangy and often dangerous dogs that roamed that region. They stole livestock and occasionally even a child.

But the word that Jesus and this Syro-Phoenician woman use, is not kuon (koo'-ohn), but kunarion (koo-nar'-ee-on), which is a puppy or household pet. One of those little living vacuum cleaners that sits under the table at dinner time.

So He was claiming her as a part of the household, but she was not the first one in line to be fed. The children seated at the table were first in line ... the Jews.

But still - put yourself there for a moment. You come to the Lord and say “Please help me” and He responds “**It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs**”.

And with that in mind ... let’s examine this woman’s response ...

Verse 28-30: This is one of those responses that just makes you go “oh - I wish I’d said that”.

Q. Within your own mind - how would you have responded? -- “That’s not fair”!
“You can’t talk to me like that”! “I’m no second class citizen”!

Q. What does the Lord owe you? What does the Lord owe me? What do we deserve?

When we honestly think of what our response to the Lord would have been it reveals something of ourselves. It reveals what we think we deserve compared to what we really deserve.

What each of us deserves is to burn in Hell for all eternity. Anything short of that is God’s grace.

And this Gentile woman understood that. She understood humility. Her proper place in the face of a holy God. No whining about fairness.

She had been ignored and rejected by the disciples even before she got to Jesus, **Matthew 15:23** tells us ... and then the Lord says “Wait until I’m finished with the Jews”.

When I get to Heaven ... I want to meet this Syrophonician woman. And I want her to tell me just how big Jesus’ smile was when He said to her "**Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter.**"

Man ... she didn’t get crumbs ... she got the whole loaf.

Verse 31: So Jesus presses a bit further north and then circles around and heads back to the east side of the Sea of Galilee.

Verses 32-37: This is new ... first He puts His fingers into the man’s ears and then He spits and touches a bit of the saliva to the mute man’s tongue before He gives a verbal command for His ears and mouth to be opened.

He’s never done it like that before and that’s just the point ... you just can’t pattern the work of God, which is what the traditions of man seek to do and why they are just not a part of God’s plan.

Don’t try to develop a method to capture the work of God. Don’t try to box God into

your own comfort zone.

Q. And did you notice that the people here had already done that? -- Look back at verse 32

Q. What's it say? – It says that they implored Him to lay His hand on this guy to heal him. See ... they already had a formula of how Jesus should do it.

So Jesus blows their little minds and does unspeakable things to their formula.

God works by His sovereign power and grace ... not by the formulas of man. But somehow that doesn't seem to stop us from trying to figure out and create formulas for Him to work within.

It's just Jesus! It's just Jesus! It's just Jesus! Leave the baggage, the formulas, the traditions ... all the man-made stuff behind. It's just Jesus.

*** Signal Usher to get P & W Leader ***

Conclusion: If your life looks more like the world than it does the Lord -- don't be fooled -- you will not become Christ-like by washing up the outside. The Pharisees tried that. And if the truth be known we try it too, but it does NOT work.

The Law of God is a thermometer. When you're sick and have a fever ... the thermometer tells you that, but to fix it you need some Tylenol ... you don't swallow the thermometer.

The Law tells us that we're sick, but no matter how hard we might try to keep the Law ... that will never make us well. For that, we need a Savior and Jesus is the only one God offers us.

Man would love to have some set of do's and don'ts that would make us right with God; just wash your hands this way and wear these clothes, but may we never, ever, ever forget that, by the very mouth of God ... the greatest commandment is that we love Him (**Matt 22:37**). It's just that simple!