

The Jesus We Never Knew
“Tradition”
Mark 7:1-23

Mark 7 - Clean and Unclean

¹The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and ²saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," 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. 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.)

⁵So 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 'unclean' hands?"

⁶He 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.

⁷They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

⁸You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

⁹And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! ¹⁰For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' ¹¹But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), ¹²then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. ¹³Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

¹⁴ Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"

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 man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? ¹⁹ For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

²⁰ He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' ²¹ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' "

Mark 7: 1 - 23 (NIV)

Mark 7:1-23

Questions for personal or small group study and reflection:

1. Did the Pharisees/teachers of the law complain because the Disciples were acting in contrary to the commands of God or contrary to tradition? How important can tradition become for us? Have we allowed traditions to become part of our belief system wherein they actually affect our faith? What religious traditions influence your life? Is that influence good or bad?
2. When are traditions good? Why do we need them? When are traditions bad? How do we struggle between the two? When have you done this in life? What is your experience? How can we bridge the two in a God-honouring way?
3. The oral traditions were established to help people obey the written law. How is it they ended up overshadowing that law? What sorts of traditions do we observe that get in the way of us really obeying/ honouring God? Are we teaching traditions to our children that nullify God's word? Have we let go of the commands of God so as to hold on to the traditions of men?
4. Jesus was much more interested in what lies in their hearts than in their outward appearances for from within a man's heart come evil and unclean things. What are the fruits of a corrupt heart? How can we make sure that our hearts are soft and right with the Lord? (Psalm 119:9-11; Prov. 4:23)
5. Are you more concerned with the outer appearance of things rather than what is in your heart? What are some things that you may be struggling with at this time? In what ways do you sometimes emphasize appearance over internal reality?
6. What is one change you need to make in your everyday life so that the traditions you keep do not turn people away from the Lord? Confess the things to God that come from wanting to look good or keep traditions that are contrary to Scriptural teaching. Pray that God will give you discernment to know which traditions are in line with Scripture and which are not.