

# [ traditional values ]

## :: mark 7 ::

Mark 7 is our text. We get a great comparison here:

**Mark 7.1-37 -Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.**

**Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”**

**He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:**

**‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’**

**For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men— the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”**

**He said to them, “ All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’ ; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban”—’ (that is, a gift to God ), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”**

**When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”**

**When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?” And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”**

**From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the**

demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

And she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.”

Then He said to her, “For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.”

And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”

Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

What we have here is a great contrast chapter between the **tradition** of the Pharisees and the **compassion** of Jesus. And remember, these Scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be these incredibly Godly people. They were supposed to be these experts in God’s Word. They had all that they needed to live the kind of life that God wanted for them, but as we’ve already seen and as we will continue to see in these studies, they were absolute failures. They rejected the Messiah. The love of God was not in them. They are the *opposite* of what we as men desire to be. They were pompous windbags who were full of hate. They misrepresented the Scriptures. They propped themselves up. They ignored God. But all the while they thought they were in right standing with God.

But what we see in a chapter like this is that they were completely lacking in compassion and humility and graciousness. They didn’t at all reflect the God that they professed to follow. We sometimes think of the God of the Old Testament as angry and full of judgment, but here’s how He described Himself back in Exodus chapter 34:

**Exodus 34.6-7a - The Lord passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty.**

So, yes, God is just and judges sin, but from the beginning He has been a God of love and mercy and grace. And those are attributes that are never associated with the Pharisees.

Instead, what they did was go around finding fault. That’s what verse 2 of our text says. They were watching Jesus and His guys and when they didn’t follow the tradition of washing their hands in a certain way, they found fault. They brought criticism. That was what they were about.

Because that's what they valued. Their own tradition. That's all they wanted to talk about and teach about and spend their time doing. These little, phony rituals and habits that *they* had decided made them holy and pious and better than those who didn't do them.

Now, as we read, Jesus totally busts them out about the state of their hearts. But they didn't care. All they cared about was their tradition. Their self-assigned, self-serving self-righteousness. And they used that tradition to go around and intimidate others. They would look at what you were doing and find fault with it so that they could seem better than you.

In the mean time of course they didn't feel the need to listen to the rest of the Word of God. They decided that the 5 things they liked best and then built a bunch of made up rules about were all they really needed to do. They didn't need to care for their parents, because they were above that. They didn't need to show mercy and grace like the God of the Bible, because they were above that. They had their little traditions and habits and exclusivities.

And as you take this chapter as a whole and compare the Pharisees in the first half to Jesus in the second half, you get the sense that the Pharisees were so busy with their phony handwashing garbage that they couldn't be bothered to interact with anyone. Even though they had set themselves up as these religious giants and even though they were going around finding fault, letting everyone know how poorly they were doing, they couldn't be bothered by people, whether it was the marketplace or at home or wherever else. They were too busy to interact with people unless it was just them talking down at other Jews, finding fault in the way someone was living their life.

Now switch over to the back half of this chapter and you see something very different. You see Jesus, as we always do, constantly interacting with people. And not always pleasant people either. But what we find, as always, is that Jesus never turns anyone away. Even in this unusual encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman, which we'll talk about in a minute, instead of finding fault like the Pharisees, **Jesus brings hope**. He operates with compassion instead of tradition.

His conversation with this Greek woman is a little strange, but it's not quite as bad as it seems. We absolutely don't have time to cover it in depth, so if you'd like a specific study on this interaction you can go to the website and read my dad's in-depth study of this chapter. That aside, Jesus still interacted with her, extended help and mercy to her and compassionately ministered to her.

And what we see in this text is that ministry is, number one, on the heart of God. His purpose is not to find fault, but to bring hope. To save us from our faults and transform us. But, number two, ministry isn't always comfortable. It's not always convenient. A lot of what Jesus did in this chapter and the 6 we've already read was inconvenient. It was taxing. It was uncomfortable and sacrificial. But He came to serve, not be served. He saw His life as an ongoing opportunity to demonstrate His compassion and to bring hope. But it wasn't easy. You see the weight of His service. He was moved by the suffering. He looked up to heaven and sighed at the agony of sin and suffering. He was disappointed when people lacked faith or when the Pharisees put burdens on others. His life wasn't easy. But He made Himself available to live out His compassion and to bring real hope to people. That's what He was about.

Several times already we've read in this book that Jesus told people not to announce He was there or not to say that He healed them. He didn't do that because He didn't want help people, He did it because His goal was not to be a performer. His goal wasn't to be this traveling miracle man that people came out to see like He was David Copperfield. His goal was to preach and to do ministry person to person, heart to heart. And everyone that God the Father brought into His path in these texts was someone that He reached out to. He didn't heal every person on the planet like He could have, but instead He was Spirit led and He never turned away those who came to Him for help. This is something I'm really trying to nail onto my heart for myself because I find that my human nature drifts more toward the Pharisee side of the chapter. My nature is more interested in finding fault in others. Or in picking one or two things I've decided are Christian enough and ignoring other stuff.

But the focus of my life isn't supposed to be tradition. It's supposed to be compassion. As the Lord fills me and directs me, He's going to use me to bring hope, not find fault. God is going to judge. God is going to deal with people's sin. We are to preach to this world about sin and the need that everyone has for salvation, but as we go from person to person we need to go in compassion, bringing hope, not tradition, finding fault. Jesus always spoke the truth to people, He always called them out on sin. But He was never too busy to interact with someone who needed ministry and He was never too holy to stoop down and do uncomfortable service for those around Him. Because He valued ministering to others. Pharisees valued putting themselves above others. Psychologically, conversationally, religiously.

If we use our modern vernacular, the Pharisees thought they were Christian enough and that they didn't need to listen to all the word of God, they only needed to listen to the parts they thought they were already doing. So, honor your father and mother, "oh I don't need to do that because I already did this over here or that over there." And they didn't need to stoop down and interact with people because, after all, those people are full of faults and don't deserve my time or my care.

And if we're not careful we get selective like that. We start to value the things we're already doing more than the ministry God is placing in front of us. And we get selective about how uncomfortable we're willing to be when it comes to discipleship. Coming together to worship the Lord is one thing, but choosing to love my enemies, well, I can reason my way out of that one. I can figure out a tradition or a logic which exempts me from that. That's what a Pharisee does.

It's a hard thing to protect our hearts from the mindset of a Pharisee. It's not easy. But it is simple. What we need to do is value the whole word of God, value the people God has placed in our lives, be they desirable or not, and value the ministry that God wants to do person to person and heart to heart. And I assure you I'm speaking to myself here, because I want to be better about finding value in ministry more than myself. I want to be more compassionate to people who feel inconvenient to me. That's what we want as disciples. So our part is to have ears to hear and to recognize that any attitude of self-service or self-righteousness or self-importance isn't from God, it's from the Pharisee in our hearts. And instead of going through life finding fault, we should go through this life bringing hope. That's the Christian calling.

The cultural and religious traditions we have need to be evaluated. Because if those traditions are eating away at our compassion for people who are different than us, then we've got a problem. Because compassion is always to overcome tradition in the life of a disciple.

So, to all of us and to myself I say this morning, be compassionate, bring hope and interact with the people God has brought into the text of your life today. That's what puts us in the back half of this chapter with Jesus and keeps us from the sinful self-righteousness of the Pharisees.