

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
9-18-24

Mark 7

Religious Leaders Find Fault With Jesus Disciples – Verses 1-5

¹ The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus ² and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, 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. ⁴ When 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. ⁵ So 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 defiled hands?”

7:1 The religious leaders sent some investigators from their headquarters in Jerusalem to check up on Jesus. The delegation didn’t like what they found, however, because Jesus scolded them for keeping the law and the traditions in order to look holy instead of to honor God. The prophet Isaiah accused the religious leaders of his day of doing the same thing (Isaiah 29: 13). Jesus used Isaiah’s words to accuse these men.

7:3-4 Mark explained these Jewish rituals because he was writing to a non-Jewish audience. Before each meal, devout Jews performed a short ceremony, washing their hands and arms in a specific way. The disciples did not have dirty hands, but they were simply not carrying out this traditional cleansing. The Pharisees thought this ceremony cleansed them from any contact they might have had with anything considered unclean. Jesus said they were wrong in thinking they were acceptable to God just because they were clean on the outside.

7:4 Christians become like Pharisees when they worry that contact with unbelievers may leave them tainted— avoiding “worldly” places where sinners hang out or rejecting books or speakers whose ideas do not conform to theirs. Some Christians and some Pharisees have a lot in common: Both would try to stop Jesus from working in certain places or talking to certain people. Jesus wants us to go out into the world and make contact. Jesus didn’t intend for us to withdraw, purify ourselves, and never reach out.

Exalting Man’s Tradition Over God’s Will – Verses 6-9

⁶ He 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. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules. ⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.” ⁹ And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

7:6-7 Hypocrisy is pretending to be something you are not and have no intention of being. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites because they worshiped God for the wrong reasons. Their worship was not motivated by love but by a desire to attain profit, to appear holy, and to increase their status. We become hypocrites when we (1) pay more attention to reputation than to character, (2) carefully follow certain religious practices while allowing our hearts to remain distant from God, and (3) emphasize our virtues but others’ sins.

7:8-9 The Pharisees had added hundreds of their own rules and regulations to God's holy laws, and then they tried to force people to follow these rules. These men claimed to know God's will in every detail of life. There are still religious leaders today who add rules and regulations to God's Word, causing much confusion among believers. It is idolatry to claim that your interpretation of God's Word is as important as God's Word itself. It is especially dangerous to set up unbiblical standards for others to follow. Instead, look to Christ for guidance about your own behavior, and let him lead others in the details of their lives.

7:8-9 Jesus wasn't against all tradition, but he was against those who made their traditions as important, if not more important, than God's Word. Good traditions shine a spotlight on God's Word, move us to obedient service, and help our hearts sing. They explain and reinforce the teachings of God. God's Word should always be the focus, and tradition a means of bringing that Word alive. Celebrate your traditions with the prayer that Christ would be exalted. Change your traditions if they become more important than God's Word.

An Example Of How Their Traditions Dishonored God – Verses 10-13

¹⁰ For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother, and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. ¹¹ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— ¹² then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. ¹³ Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.'"

7:10-11 The Pharisees used God as an excuse to avoid helping their families. They thought it was more important to put money in the temple treasury than to help their needy parents, although God's law specifically says to honor fathers and mothers (Exodus 20:12) and to care for those in need (Leviticus 25: 35-43). We should give money and time to God, but we must never use God as an excuse to neglect our responsibilities. Helping those in need is one of the most important ways to honor God.

Jesus Speaks To The Multitude & Disciples – Verses 14-23

¹⁴ Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them." ¹⁶ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" 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 person from the outside can defile them? ¹⁹ For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

7:18-19 As they interpreted the dietary laws (Leviticus 11), the Jews believed they could be clean before God because of what they refused to eat. Jesus pointed out that sin begins in the attitudes and intentions of the inner person. Jesus did not degrade the law, but he paved the way for the change made clear in Acts 10: 9-29 when God removed the cultural restrictions regarding food. While being concerned about what we put into our bodies is a good, healthy practice, very few people are as stringent about what they put into their minds through reading or watching television. Jesus was more concerned about mind-set and thought processes than about food laws. Do you worry about what foods you eat, but put "junk food" in your mind?

7:20-23 An evil action begins with a single thought. Allowing our minds to dwell on lust, envy, hatred, or revenge will lead to sin. Don't defile yourself by focusing on evil. Instead, follow Paul's advice in Philippians 4: 8 and think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

Jesus Honors a Syrophenician Woman's Faith – Verses 24-26

²⁴ **Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.** ²⁵ **In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet.** ²⁶ **The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.**

7:24 Jesus traveled about 30 miles to Tyre. The cities of Tyre and Sidon were port cities on the Mediterranean Sea north of Israel. Both had flourishing trade and were very wealthy. They were proud, historic Canaanite cities. In David's day, Tyre was on friendly terms with Israel (2 Samuel 5:11), but soon afterward the city became known for its wickedness. Its king even claimed to be God (Ezekiel 28: 1-26). Tyre rejoiced when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., because without Israel's competition, Tyre's trade and profits would increase. It was into this evil and materialistic culture that Jesus brought his message.

7:26 This woman is called a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. Mark's designation refers to her political background. His Roman audience would easily identify her by the part of the empire that was her home. This woman came to intercede for her daughter, and she is a picture of an intercessor because she made her daughter's needs her own.

Jesus responds to the woman's request – Verses 27-30

²⁷ **"First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."** ²⁸ **"Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."** ²⁹ **Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."** ³⁰ **She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.**

7:27-28 On the surface, Jesus' words may seem harsh and unsympathetic, but the woman recognized them as a wide-open door to God's throne. Jesus did not use the negative term for "dogs" that referred to scavengers (the word sometimes used by Jews to refer to Gentiles); instead, he used the term for a household pet. The woman took the cue and added to his analogy of pets under a family dining table. Her attitude was expectant and hopeful, not prickly or hypersensitive. She knew what she wanted and she believed Jesus could provide. We could learn from this woman's singular purpose and optimistic resilience. Jesus really does want to meet our needs. When we pray, we're talking to a friend. This miracle shows that Jesus' power over demons is so great that he doesn't need to be present physically in order to free someone. His power transcends any distance.

Jesus Heals A Deaf And Mute Man – Verses 31-37

³¹ **Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.** ³² **There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.** ³³ **After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue.** ³⁴ **He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!").** ³⁵ **At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.** ³⁶ **Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so,**

the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

7:34 When Jesus said, “Be opened!” he used language that this deaf man would understand. The healing message was personal and unique. Whoever thought spittle might be the conduit of a miracle? If there is only one means of witness in your church (sermons, for instance), many people likely will not hear. Churches need lots of different methods to meet diverse needs. Let musicians play, singers sing, actors act, and writers write. Let each creative Christian tell the story. Jesus used spit and mud; surely we can find windows to the minds and hearts of people as well.