

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 26TH–27TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

FROM THE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE? (MARK 7:1–23) THE CONFRONTATION (VS. 1–5)

As Jesus' fame grew, so did His notoriety and infamy amongst the Jewish religious establishment.

- The group described in verse 1 is most likely an official delegation sent from Jerusalem to evaluate the ministry of Jesus.
- They have already made up their minds about Jesus; now they are just looking for proof.
- The Jewish oral law and traditions (not Scripture) called for rigid and extensive ceremonial washings of all types (vs. 3–4).
- This was not done for hygiene or sanitation but to make one spiritually clean from the defiling influences of the outside world.
- Jesus' disciples apparently did not follow these traditions, and this delegation brought it up.

THE CONDEMNATION (VS. 6–8)

In response, Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah: the wayward people of God prioritized tradition and human customs over God's commands.

- Jesus calls these religious leaders "hypocrites"—actors or people who wear a mask.
- External rituals and religious performance can serve as a kind of mask for internal rebellion.
- You can keep rules with a heart far from God.

THE DANGER OF TRADITION OVER HEART OBEDIENCE

Spiritual/religious traditions in and of themselves are not necessarily wrong. The danger is when:

- They are taught and promoted to the same level as Scripture.
- They are used to judge/exclude others and provide a sense of spiritual superiority/elitism.
- They replace an actual relationship with God.
- They mask rebellion with external conformity.

TRADITION DISPLACING TRUTH (VS. 9–13)

An example of blatant hypocrisy was found in the practice of declaring something as "*corban*" (an offering to God) to get out of caring for aging parents.

- God clearly commanded His people to honor their mothers and fathers, yet the religious loophole given by the Pharisees was that if you declared your assets as "*corban*," you were exempt.
- Religious hypocrisy still leads some of us to use spiritual language or religious traditions/commitments to excuse disobedience!
- "I'm already giving to _____, so I don't need to help that person God has put in front of me."
- "I'm too busy serving God to care for my spouse or family or neighbor."
- "I'll pray about it/it's not my spiritual gift/calling."

REDEFINING DEFILEMENT (VS. 14–19)

What really defiles us is not what goes into the body (food) but what comes out of the heart.

- Keeping kosher does not make you clean or unclean spiritually (v. 19).
- Going to church does not automatically make you spiritually alive, voting republican or democrat does not make you righteous, and avoiding alcohol, tattoos, or certain movies/music does not automatically make you holy.

THE REAL PROBLEM: A CORRUPTED HEART (VS. 20–23)

External actions flow from the condition of the inner person; sin is a heart issue, not an issue of behavioral modification or sheltering.

- Evil thoughts, sexual immorality, envy, pride, etc.—these are not things we "catch" from rubbing shoulders with those wicked, nasty unreligious sinners. They come from within our own hearts!

The message of the gospel is not one of external behavioral modification—it is one of internal heart transformation through grace.

- Only Jesus can purify the heart. That is why we look to the cross and the cleansing power of His blood.
- We need the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to give us a genuine desire to please the Lord (Col. 3:9–10) with our lives and actions.

A HEART CHECK-UP

Are there any traditions/doctrines of man that I have elevated to the place of Scripture?

- Have I used my personal convictions (traditions) to judge/exclude others and feel spiritually superior or elite?
- Are there any clear commands of God that I am disobeying and using spiritual language/tradition to excuse my disobedience?
- Mark 12:30–31

CRUMBS FOR THE PUPPIES (MARK 7:24–30)

After Jesus' confrontation with Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, He and His disciples now move outside of Jewish territory altogether.

- The region of Tyre (modern-day Lebanon) was seen as the epitome of Gentile "uncleanness."
- Tyre and Sidon were frequently condemned by OT prophets as enemies of Israel (Is. 23; Jer. 25).
- Jesus is now entering into this "unclean" region to be around "unclean" people.

Of all the Gentile nationalities, those of Syrophenician/Canaanite descent would have been the most hated by the Jews.

- The Canaanites were one of the nations Israel was instructed to wipe out when they entered the Promised Land (Deut. 7:1–2).
- Jezebel, one of the most wicked queens in the history of Israel, was a Canaanite from the town of Sidon (1 Kings 16:31).

And yet, as Jesus enters this region, He is met by a Canaanite (Syrophenician) woman who falls at His feet and desperately asks for something she knows she doesn't deserve.

- She is in great need of His mercy and healing because she has a daughter who is tormented by a demon.
- She is a Gentile, an outsider, a woman, and hers is an unclean situation—yet she comes.

Jesus responds by telling her it is not right to "take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (v. 27).

- Her response is that even dogs eat crumbs that fall under the table (v. 28).
- Jesus' response could be misunderstood as Him insulting this woman by calling her a "dog" (an unclean animal in Judaism), but we must understand the language used here.

The term Jesus uses is the diminutive "*kunaron*" (puppy). It is an image from her world, for only Gentiles kept dogs as pets.

- Jesus is gently pushing her away so He can "feed the children" (Israel), and yet, like a charming, endearing puppy, she still persists to be fed.
- She is not asking Him to violate His program that for the moment is focused on Jews; she is only asking for leftover crumbs.

Because of her response, Jesus sends her away, assuring her of healing (vs. 29–30).

- There is something noteworthy about the persistent, desperate faith of the Gentile woman who asks for what she knows she does not deserve—AND the generosity, kindness, and goodness of Jesus in response.
- It was not her background, status, or perfect theology that earned her a miracle.

So often we can become entitled, thinking that God owes us something or that we deserve blessings, answers, and miracles from Him.

- But the truth is the only thing we really deserve from God is Hell. Yet, God is gracious, compassionate, kind, and generous.
- The kind of faith He honors is humble, yet persistent, and puts more stock in His goodness than it does our own worthiness.

BE OPENED (MARK 7:31–37)

Jesus returns to an undisclosed location within the region of the Decapolis (v. 31) where He is met by a group of people who have heard of His healing power.

- They bring to Jesus a deaf man who also has difficulty speaking and beg Jesus just to "lay His hand on him" (v. 32).

- This is a wonderful picture of intercessory prayer—bringing our loved ones to Jesus in faith.

Jesus heals in several different ways in the Gospels, and this is perhaps one of the oddest.

- First of all, it is done away from the crowd. It is not used necessarily as a public proclamation but rather an act of compassion and mercy.
- Secondly, Jesus' actions are a bit weird. He puts His fingers in the man's ears, spits, and touches the man's tongue.
- God works in His own mysterious ways.

After sticking His fingers in the man's ears and on His tongue, Jesus sighed deeply, looked up to Heaven, and spoke the Aramaic word "*Ephphatha*" ("be opened").

- In Isaiah 35:5–6, the prophet spoke of a time when "the ears of the deaf [will be] unstopped" and the "tongue of the mute will sing for joy."

- The arrival of God's Messiah would mean a reversal of the damaging effects of sin.

Immediately, the man's ears were opened and his tongue loosened, and he began to hear and speak clearly (v. 35).

- Again, Jesus told those in the region to keep the miracle a secret, yet the news of this miracle was hard to keep (v. 36).
- "He has done everything well"—His redemptive, healing work was astonishing and miraculous (v. 37).

JESUS' MIRACLES WERE OFTEN REVELATIONS OF SPIRITUAL REALITIES.

The messianic prophecy of Isaiah was not just about the Messiah opening blind eyes and deaf ears in a physical sense, but also in a spiritual sense.

- Jesus has come to restore our spiritual senses so we can respond to God.
- In our sin, we are blind and deaf to truth.

In the first half of Mark 7 (vs. 1–23), the Pharisees are hyper-religious but spiritually deaf and blind—they honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him (v. 6).

- They are loud in judgment, tradition, and religion but absolutely deaf to the Word and blind to the very heart and desire of God.
- Many today "hear" religious noise but are deaf and blind to God's grace given through Jesus.

BLIND AND DEAF TO OUR OWN LEGALISM

- There are no legalists who admit they are legalists. In their minds, they are simply upholding the true standards of righteousness with zeal.

- You can keep rules with a heart far from God while looking down on others and feeling spiritually superior, which is the opposite of God's heart.

- What is offered through Jesus is an awakening to our own spiritual need for Him and a new heart.

BLIND AND DEAF TO OUR OWN ENTITLEMENT

- Some of us will not be impressed by or interested in God unless He wows with a miracle or gives us what we think we deserve or are owed.

- What do we actually deserve from God? What have we been given from God through Jesus?
- It is not our background, status, or perfect theology that earn us miracles or blessings from God.
- Do we see ourselves accurately?

OPEN EARS TO HEAR GOD'S MESSAGE

- The message of Jesus is not "try harder to keep some new rules"; it is "repent, believe, surrender, and allow Christ to transform your heart."

- Only Jesus can change and purify your heart. Rules, standards, and religion cannot do that.

- Only the Holy Spirit can empower you to genuinely want to please God through your life and actions.

OPEN EARS TO HEAR GOD'S HEART

- God's desire is to inwardly transform His children by giving them hearts that look like His—not to mandate outward conformity to some rules they can follow with distant, cold hearts.

- God's heart is one of compassion, love, grace, and mercy towards those who are undeserving. Is that your heart? Or is yours one of exclusion, self-righteous judgment, and elitism?