



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #26

‘Tangled up in Tradition!’

Mark 7:1-13

Sunday, October 27th, 2024

Last week in ‘NOW’ sermon series:

- Last Sunday we looked at the 25th sermon in our NOW Sermon Series.
 - I preached a sermon entitled *‘There’s no Water that He Won’t Walk on, for You!’*
 - I asked the question: *What do we see Jesus do in this text that shows us nothing can stop Jesus from caring and loving us?*
 - **Point 1:** *Prioritize Personal Prayer. (V. 45-47)*
 - **Point 2:** *Purposefully Seek Out Others’ Pain. (V. 48-49)*

- **Point 3:** *Place your Fears in His Hands. (V. 50-51)*
- **Point 4:** *Protect Yourself from Potential Temptation. (V. 52)*
- **Point 5:** *Potential Needs are Needs Met. (V. 53-56)*

- Based on last Sunday’s message, how much have you been trusting Jesus with the storms you’ve encountered this week. Even the storms that you can’t control or that you didn’t know were coming.

‘Tangled up in Tradition!’

Mark 7:1-13

Sermon in a Sentence:

We can fall into the temptation of getting Tangled up in Tradition when we are focused on Lurking on Others, and Leaving God’s Word behind, which leaves a Lesson for us to learn.

Intro:

- **Illustration**
 - Several months ago I was asked to fill in for a Wednesday Morning Bible Study at a Church.
 - I got to the Bible Study and they were singing a few hymns. After they sang the hymns, I got up, opened up my Bible and began to preach the Word.

- A man comes forward and tells on members of the community by name, expecting immunity from punishment, only to be burned in the Church with the rest of the community, as the movie plot goes.
- ***During Jesus' earthly ministry up to this point we've been told in the text from time to time that the Pharisees were around.***
 - As much as Mark records that they questioned Jesus, it makes it seem as if they were following Him, and I believe they were. Waiting on Him to fall and to fail (in their minds).
 - ***As I've gotten older I've learned that we adults are not much different than the Pharisees we see here in verses 1-4, and in the Children we all were in elementary school.***
 - Too often than not, I've seen, witnessed, experienced or engaged in it myself when I lurk into the spiritual windows of others.
 - ***As I've said before, we must all be careful to not be a spiritual peeping tom.***
 - ***Dr. Daniel Akin said 'They (Pharisees) are certain they knew who Jesus is, and they are determined to take Him down.'***
 - That's who the Pharisees are here. As we look at how they

were Lurking on Jesus and His disciples, let me show you the main complaint that the Pharisees had with Jesus and His Disciples.

- ***The Pharisees accuse Jesus' Disciples of being Unclean. (V. 1-4)***
 - 'Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, **2** they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. **3** (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly,^[a] holding to the tradition of the elders, **4** and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.^[b] And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.^[c])'
 - According to John 6:4, the feeding of the 5,000 took place near the time of the yearly Jewish Passover. (this would have been one year before Jesus would die on the Cross)
 - ***The narrative we find here in Mark 7, is believed to have occurred shortly after Jesus had just fed the 5,000.***
 - ***Because of this, I believe many of these pharisees had traveled to Jerusalem to Galilee for the Passover and also Mark tells us in verse***

1 that these particular pharisees did come from Jerusalem.

- JM states *'most likely, they came at the request of Galilean members of their sect to help confront Jesus in light of His widespread and threatening popularity.'*
- Either way, the time period of year and context clues give the idea that this was a very 'elite' and pious group of pharisees.
- ***In verses 1-4, they accuse Jesus' Disciples as being unclean, but what exactly are they targeting?***
 - In Leviticus 22:6-7, the Mosaic law prescribed washings for priests before they ate.
 - But, the Mosaic law did not prescribe that for anyone else before they ate.
- ***Over the years the Jewish Pharisees came up with their own rules called the Mishnah, Jewish oral law, and we are told by Mark in verse 3 that they held to the 'tradition of the elders'***
 - Since we are not jews, what does this phrase mean?
 - ***tradition of the elders*** were extrabiblical regulations that had been passed down from the time

of Babylonian captivity that lasted from 605-535 B.C.

- ***These were oral traditions which permeated the minds of Jews in Jesus day, and would eventually be written down and called the mishnah in the 2nd century, AD.***
- What the Pharisees are undoubtedly doing here, is looking over the shoulders of the Pharisees and essentially saying 'we aren't that bad'
 - ***We wash our hands before we eat, and look, they aren't obeying the rules and laws that we have come up with.***
- ***At the root 'the tradition of the elders' was established to put spiritual superiority over the common people and elevate the scribes and pharisees.***
 - The Pharisees and even Jews as a whole, had gotten to the point where they were enslaved by these rules, and not living in the freedom that Christ had come to give them.
- Lurking on others to find their faults is not freeing them, it's enslaving you. So stop doing it.

Truth #2: *Lesson for Us. (vv. 5-8)*

- The Pharisees have made their complaint and their accusation against Jesus:
 - **The Disciples were eating without having washed their hands.**
 - **The complaint that the pharisees raised dealt with the disciples, but the true object of this matter was Jesus.**
 - In the mind of the Pharisees it was the fact that Jesus was allowing His disciples to eat with unwashed hands.
 - In their minds, allowing His disciples to sin.
 - **To me, I can't help but see how petty this is. How far reaching this is and how this is a strong example of grasping at straws.**
 - Have you ever met someone that will find anything known to man to complain out?
 - **Even to the point of grasping at straws just to be negative?**
 - **The Pharisees certainly fill that bill here, and there's a lesson for all of us to learn about the danger of getting tangled up in tradition...**
- **A Petty Question. (V. 5)**
 - 'And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to

the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

- We just looked at how the Pharisees were lurking on Jesus and the disciples, just waiting for them to fall and to do something against 'their laws'.
 - **Though it was petty, they did find something which caused them to ask this question.**
- As I mentioned a moment ago, **tradition of the elders** were extrabiblical regulations that had been passed down from the time of Babylonian captivity that lasted from 605-535 B.C.
 - **These were oral traditions which permeated the minds of Jews in Jesus day, and would eventually be written down and called the mishnah in the 2nd century, AD.**
 - By the time Jesus walked the earth, it had been a few hundred years, and the Jews had officially allowed their oral laws to trump over God's Word.
- **Now it's important to note that Jesus is not going to answer their question, He will answer it to His disciples in Mark 7:17-23, but He will not answer their immediate question, instead He will give them a perpetuating quotation from the OT that they can reflect on.**

- ***A Perpetuating Quotation. (V. 6-7)***
 - ‘And he 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; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’
 - Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus called out and exposed Hypocrites, this is something that He did quite regularly
 - ***In the original Greek Text, you can see Jesus sarcasm here in verse 6 and verse 9.***
 - It’s almost like Jesus is saying ‘How convenient of you to exchange the truth and validity of God’s Word for your own traditional truths and opinions.’
 - ***Jesus does not comment here on the fact that His disciples did not wash their hands, but He does seek to uncover the heart of this matter.***
 - ***What’s the heart problem Jesus is seeking to expose in these Pharisees?***
 - Is the source of their spiritual authority the Word of God or their oral traditions that they came up with?
 - In order to expose them, He pulls an OT quotation, which was ***Isaiah 29:13***.
 - ***Jesus is essentially saying, you are the fulfillment of this OT prophecy that Isaiah Prophesied of.***
- YOU are the ones that are honoring the Lord with lip service but your heart is nowhere close.
 - ***This is a Lesson you and I can learn from:***
 - ***We must guard ourselves against being the kind of Christ followers who have our mouths full of Bible verses, religious sayings, and remarks, but in reality we do that to hide the fact that our heart is far away from God.***
 - You and I must answer the question today in our lives: ***Am I a text-driven or tradition-driven Christian?***
 - Oftentimes in our Churches when there are conflicts, it’s tradition that will win out and not the Truth of God’s Word.
 - ***Contemporary examples of legalism in Churches today could potentially be but not always are:***
 - Business meetings, Deacons meetings, Church discipline, and religious practices such as Church names, meeting times, dress, worship wars (style), invitations, SS literature, color of the carpet, all of these things.

- *Not necessarily in this Church, but in some Churches in the Big C these are simply checklists. Once we check them off, we're good.*
- What's harder to do though, is to examine your heart.
 - *As your Pastor I'm a firm believer that if we do something in the Church, or in our Christian lives, we need to have a scriptural basis and reason for doing so.*
- *A Problematic Quandary. (V. 8)*
 - 'You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.'
 - Just in case the Pharisees missed the point, Jesus made it ever so clear with what He said in verse 8.
 - The word quandary can be defined as 'a state of perplexity or uncertainty of what to do in a difficult situation.'
 - *The quandary here is what were the pharisees (and us), going to do when confronted with the error of their ways.*
 - The Mishnah (Jewish Oral Law) is kept in the Talmud (All Jewish Law put together), and in that book this quotation is found:

- "It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis than to contradict Scripture itself."
- *That is certainly the sentiment that we get here with these Pharisees.*
 - The scriptures don't tell us what these pharisees said or didn't say in response to Jesus, but I'm sure they weren't happy.
- **Word Study**
 - The word 'leave' in verse 8 is the first word in the greek sentence in Mark 7:8.
 - It is translated from a greek word **'Aphiemi'** ἀφέντες *which literally means to send away, or dismiss and to not care about.*
 - The significance of this word is not that they just left God's commandments, but that they left it for something better (in their minds)...
 - *Their own opinion and tradition.*
- *Almost weekly I see this problematic quandary. So called 'Christians' would rather leave the truth of God's Word for contemporary or modern ideas that align more closely with cultural tradition, that Christ honoring truth found in the Bible.*

- The lesson we must learn from the quotation Jesus shares and His Words is this: *Your Own Traditions and Opinions do not triumph over the Word of God.*

Truth #3: *Leaving God's Word Behind.* (vv. 9-13)

- Legalism climaxes in someone's heart when they value their tradition over God's Word.
 - As Dr. Daniel Aiken said '*Not all traditions are bad. They become bad when we put them on the same level as Scripture or in the place of Scripture.*'
 - *Church, this is what we call a 'Bible-Plus' religion.*
 - These Pharisees added to the Bible what they wanted, instead of realizing God in Human Flesh was right in front of them.
 - *You and I must be extremely careful to not add to the Bible our own traditions, because when we do this, we are in fact leaving God's Word completely behind.*
 - 'I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, **19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the

holy city, which are described in this book.' Revelation 22:18-19

■ *The traditions of man, like these pharisees, are incapable of cleansing the heart, it actually just leads to disregarding the Bible all together.*

- *Church, this is what we see in cults and other religions who claim Christ but do not even use the Bible as the basis for their 'religion' or 'cult'.*

- Jesus is going to attempt to continue to explain this to the Pharisees, as He is going to bring up the words of Moses, someone they allegedly respected, and show them how they were leaving God's Word out.

■ We can see they (the Pharisees) were leaving God's Word out in **2** ways...

● *An Illusion.* (v. 9)

- 'And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!"
- An 'Illusion' can be defined as a deceptive appearance or impression.

■ *As the illustration that Jesus will give will indicate, these Pharisees were guilty of establishing their own tradition and their own pockets, under the umbrella of 'Obeying God'.*

- *These pharisees are setting aside God's Word, in order to establish their own.*
 - W.W. said *'It does us good to examine our church traditions in the light of God's Word and to be courageous enough to make changes.'*
- Church Tradition and 'This is how we've always done it' are illusions for us to stay in our comfort zones and because we know it'll cause more work for us to seek to actually be Biblical.
 - *Isn't this sad? That many (not all) of our Churches are in this exact spot that Jesus is telling the Pharisees that they were in?*
- First Century Judaism that Jesus was calling out here, is like every form of false (apostate) religions.
 - *Every false religion elevates man-made traditions above the teachings of Scripture.*
 - *Sure, these Pharisees did the right amount of lip service in order to please those and give the illusion that they were 'obeying and serving God' but in reality they were using that as a disguise to hide just how far their hearts really were away from God.*
- I was once told the story of a Pastor who was in his early 30's. He went through 12 years of undergrad, seminary, and doctoral school to get all the theological education he could get.
 - *He was married with young children and got to Pastor his first Church in his early 30s.*
- He had around 50 people in his congregation.
 - *He came in excited and hungry, ready for God to work and move. But, he was confronted with the foe of tradition.*
- He attempted to preach sermons longer than 30 minutes, and was confronted after the service that He couldn't do that.
 - *When he asked why he was told 'We've never had a preacher preach longer than 30 minutes. Plus, we've got to have 10+ min of announcements, 15+ for Children's sermons, and we've got to have time to sing our hymns.'*
- This young Pastor found items in the Church Bylaws that were completely contrary to the scriptures.
 - *When he brought this up, he got the same response. 'That's the way we've always done it and you aren't coming in here and changing it.'*
- For holidays there were things that were done in the services that glorified man and individuals

more than it glorified God. This Pastor finally had enough and was told by his deacons that he needed to keep his mouth shut, or no longer have a job.

- ***This Pastor made it a year and a half, and is no longer in the ministry.***
- ***He fought tradition, and tradition won.***
 - ***And we wonder why so many SBC Churches are dying.***
- What many SBC (& Bible Believing) Churches have done is commit spiritual suicide.
 - ***Spiritual suicide is when a Church pushes away the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God, and elevates their man made traditions.***
 - Just look at what the Methodist Church has done.
- ***In Mark 7:1-13 this morning, we've seen the progression that happens in Churches all across our land...***
 - Like verse 7, they'll start teaching the commands of men.
 - Like verse 8, they'll leave the commands of God all together.
 - Like verse 9, they will openly reject and defy the commands of God.
 - ***This is a down slope progression and Jesus straight calls it out.***

■ ***I wonder if what Jesus said in verses 8-9, is what He is saying about a lot of Churches today?***

- May we never let this happen at FBCG.
- Jesus unveils the illusion, but He also gives an illustration to prove His point here...
- ***An Illustration. (vv. 10-13)***
 - 'For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' **11** But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)[d]— **12** then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, **13** thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.'
 - Jesus already revealed what they were doing partially by pulling from Isaiah 29 in the verses we looked at already.
 - ***Now, He takes them to Exodus 20:12 and Exodus 21:17.***
 - In verse 10, Jesus reveals the fifth commandment that God have given to His people and that the people of Israel were to honor, respect and treat their parents with care.
 - ***Let me remind you that the Israelites would leave their parents out for dead***

as they left Egypt as it would take too much time, money and effort to take care of them.

- ***And so when God gave Moses the Law (10 Commandments), this was the 5th one and an important one.***
 - ***To not do this, was a violation of the fifth commandment and a crime worthy of death.***
 - “Whoever curses^[a] his father or his mother shall be put to death.’
Exodus 21:17
- ***So Jesus brings up their own Hypocrisy to show them how they were leaving God’s Word out of their lives, and totally disregarding what the Word says.***
 - Matthew 15:1-20 is the passage in Matthew’s Gospel that parallels this.
 - Jesus says there, that the pharisees were telling others this in ***Matthew 15:5: ‘But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, ‘What you would have gained from me is given to God,’***
- ***There, just as He does here, Jesus reveals that the Pharisees were telling people to not spend the money that would be needed to take care of their parents, and give it to God.***

■ ****Word Study****

- The word ‘Corban’ here in verse 11 comes from the Greek Word ***‘Korbanas’ Κορβάν*** and literally means a financial offering or gift.
- So the Pharisees would preach that instead of obeying God’s Word by financially supporting and taking care of their parents who could no longer take care of themselves, they were taught by the Pharisees to give it to the Church. ***Why?***
 - ***These Pharisees were getting the benefit of that wealth even though the money rightly belonged to God.***
- The reasoning of the Pharisees is this: ***I am going to serve God by disobeying His command to honor my parents, but it’s okay because I’m giving that money instead to the Church.***
 - Please note, this was not a tithe, this would have been an offering (over and beyond a tithe), and that the Pharisees were self serving in this matter.
- ***This is why Jesus says in verse 13, that in doing this, they have disregarded and made void the Word of God.***
 - This is what we do when we place our traditions above God’s Word.

- *Dr. Daniel Aiken said 'That kind of reasoning reveals the hardness of our hearts, the hypocrisy of our worship, and the disobedience of our actions, all in the name of religion! These are not atheists and secularists. These are the religious and spiritual leaders of Israel.'*
- *Leaving God's Word behind as absolute Authority and as the infallible and inerrant Word of God is not okay and will never be okay and permissible in this Church.*
 - Don't let your love of tradition and all things comforting lead you down a road of ultimately denying God's Word.

Conclusion:

- *This morning we've been able to see the dangers of getting tangled up in tradition instead of focusing on God's Word.*
 - Tradition usually binds us instead of freeing us.
- As I shared just a moment ago, tradition is not always a bad thing, but tradition should never be an excuse for willingly going against God's Word.
 - *The human heart can become an Idol factory. And when it comes to idols, satan loves to use those to get Christians distracted.*
 - *Especially religious traditions.*
- The question I want EACH of us including me to answer through prayer during this time of reflection is: Am I as guilty as these pharisees of being tangled up in tradition over God's Word?

- **Truth #1: *Lurking on Others.* (vv. 1-4)**
- **Truth #2: *Lesson for Us.* (vv. 5-8)**
- **Truth #3: *Leaving God's Word Behind.* (vv. 9-13)**