

Mark 7
Feb. 28, 2010
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

Mark continues to teach us about how God feeds His people. Jesus is the one who feeds. We need to come to understand how He feeds and how He has passed on this work of feeding to His disciples and to His Church.

We must also keep in mind the ongoing contrast that He has presented us in the Pharisees. They are representatives of failed Israel. They were commissioned with the job of feeding shepherding God's people. But instead they are the very ones that Jesus must protect His sheep from. The shepherds have become the wolves.

They prove their wolfishness by their desire to eat up the Lord Jesus Himself.

EXEGESIS

¹Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. ²And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

Mark is continuing with the theme of feeding. Jesus has come to feed His people. He does this by healing and eating with people. He does this by preaching the gospel and teaching. He does this by commissioning the apostles to go out and feed the people.

He does this in contrast to the Pharisees who eat up the people rather than feeding them. In fact, the Pharisees are more like the wicked Herod than the true shepherds of Israel.

We see that again here in the Pharisees protest against the way that Jesus and His disciples eat. They would rather have the disciples not eat at all if they will not eat like them.

³For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. ⁴And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.

This washing is ritualistic washing. They do indeed wash their hands but they want it made clear that the washing of their hands is necessary for one

to have a pure heart. Thus, they are making the claim that they understand this and are therefore pure.

Jesus takes issue with this. They have exchanged the outward show for the inward reality. They do not have pure hearts even though they have clean hands and dishes.

This ceremonial washing has gone beyond the law. God did require all these hand washings nor washings of the dinnerware. If it was unclean by contact with an unclean animal or a wasting disease, then it needed to be cleansed with water or broken. But that is not what is going on here. The Pharisees had invented an entire show of purity that God did not require.

⁵Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

The Pharisees are indignant with Jesus for His reformation. They had got all the trappings figured out and were appalled that anyone would adjust their system of righteousness. They do not even claim that it is biblical. It is the tradition of the elders.

Before we too quickly condemn the Pharisees we must understand this tendency of man to go beyond the Scriptures. We do so in many things. Has not Westminster spoken? We hope the tradition of our elders is more biblical than the Pharisees and more biblical than the Roman Catholics who preceded us but we should not mistake our traditions for God's traditions. And we should be willing to be corrected where the Bible corrects us.

Furthermore, there is a constant tendency among Christians to create laws beyond the Scriptures, "Do not taste, do not drink, do not handle." Christians are often involved in the latest food fads. But God declares all foods clean.

So, we need to find discernment about what is clearly biblical and what is simply part of our tradition and is not strictly biblical. We need to understand the difference between principles and methods. And then we need to be gracious towards other Christians in and outside of our own tradition. Finally, we need to always let the Word of Christ correct our traditions and/or unbiblical practices, which might be the same thing.

⁶He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. ⁷Howbeit in vain do they worship me,

teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. ⁸For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

Jesus quotes a passage from a judgment passage in Isaiah. The Pharisees probably understood that Jesus was condemning and threatening them.

You see the danger here. A show of religion may not be true religion, at all. God has always required circumcised hearts, not just circumcision. Now, we might say that God requires a baptized heart, not just a baptized head. We call this regeneration. A man must have a renewed and soft heart. He must desire to do the Lord's will. It is not enough to simply go through the trappings of religion if they heart is not converted.

But the carnal man wants to focus on the simple things that he can do to look spiritual. The less spiritual he is, the greater this temptation will be.

⁹And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. ¹⁰For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: ¹¹But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. ¹²And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; ¹³Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

This tendency can take a grotesque turn. The Pharisees had created a way for children to keep from taking care of their parents. The children can swear that their money is given to God. If it is given to God, then it cannot be given to their parents. But this is in direct contradiction to the law of God. God says to honor your parents. But the Pharisees had somehow turned their version of honoring God into dishonoring parents. They encouraged their people to dishonor their parents and pretended that this was self sacrifice to God. It was all a lie.

Jesus says that they do many such things. I wish Mark had given us more of them. It is clear that the Pharisees were trying to rig the system to get more money out of people. We are not exactly sure how this Corban thing worked but no doubt somebody was skimming money from the deal.

We should also clearly understand from this passage what it meant to honor father and mother. Jesus teaches that it means taking care of them financially.

¹⁴And when he had called all the people *unto him*, he said unto them, Harken unto me every one *of you*, and understand: ¹⁵There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. ¹⁶If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

The Pharisees don't get it and neither do many Christians today. Food and drink does not defile. People constantly want defilements to come from outside of them. That way, their sin can be somebody else's or something else's fault. But Jesus makes it very clear, outside things do not make one unclean. At the time He says this, there are still unclean foods. Jesus is essentially announcing what is later made explicitly clear by Peter and taught by St. Paul. All foods are clean.

This was news to the Jews. They should have understood this but somehow they did not get it. God had given them holiness laws to make a distinction between them and the pagan peoples around them. But they misused and misapplied those laws, thinking that their use of the outward symbol automatically purified them. This was never the case.

We need to be purified not on the outside but on the inside. How can this be done? Through repentance and forgiveness.

¹⁷And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. ¹⁸And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, *it cannot defile him*; ¹⁹Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

We can tell this was a change because the apostles had a hard time getting their mind around it. They even call His statement a parable. It really was not a parable. He had made a very direct statement. But they assumed it had some other deeper meaning. He explains to them in a more detailed fashion the very same truth. Food goes in and comes out. In the process, it does nothing to defile the soul of a man. The defilement is in the heart, in the mind, in the emotions, in the intellect.

²⁰And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. ²¹For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²²Thefts, covetousness, wickedness,

deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: ²³All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

What defiles a man? Not food, not drink, but sins that proceed from him. These are a list of common sins but I think Jesus is taking another shot at the Pharisees here. They think they are holy because they keep dietary and ceremonial traditions. However, they have rampant sins in their midst. This is a corrupt system.

Thefts- stealing from parents.

Covetousness- no doubt a deal was cut to get portion of that money.

Wickedness- why did they catch a woman in adultery and not a man?

Deceit- think about how they constantly tried to trap Jesus with their questions.

Lasciviousness- their brand of legalism is no protection against carnal desires. But because there is a show of legalistic behavior, the carnal desires take a new and stronger hold.

Evil eye- this is withholding that which is due. Being greedy and not being generous.

Blasphemy- The Pharisees not only blasphemed the Son of God, they also blasphemed the Holy Spirit, saying that the work that Jesus did was work done by Beelzebub. This meant they were blaspheming God. Furthermore, here, they follow their tradition but disregard God's law as less important than their tradition. This is blasphemy.

Pride- Was their ever a more proud people?

Foolishness- They were unable and unwilling to see their error.

All these evil things were in the heart of the Pharisees. They would not receive it but Jesus's humble disciples could receive it and repent and be saved. But the Pharisees did not need a Savior because they washed their hands and ate the right foods.

²⁴And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: but he could not be hid. ²⁵For a *certain* woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: ²⁶The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

Jesus will feed not only His people but all nations. This woman wants a demon cast out of her daughter.

²⁷But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs. ²⁸And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. ²⁹And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. ³⁰And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

Jesus does so and tells her that this is feeding her from his children's table. He even insults her, calling her a dog. This was a common term for the Jews to call Gentiles. Jesus is in effect using a racial slur. But what does He mean? There is indication in the final part of this story that the woman might be a rich woman. She has come to the poor teacher from Israel for food. The Pharisees will not feed their own people, much less the surrounding peoples. Jesus keeps getting rejected by His people and when He goes to Gentile regions, the people flock to Him.

The term Jesus uses with the woman is softened to puppy. The woman seems to understand Jesus right away and continues with her appeal. He means to feed her and she knows it.

Here is another Gentile of great faith. Jesus is willing to feed her and her daughter is healed. Jesus has power of all demons even in Gentile territory and with non-Jewish people. He is the good shepherd, not only of Israel but of all peoples.

³¹And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. ³²And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. ³³And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; ³⁴And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. ³⁵And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. ³⁶And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published *it*; ³⁷And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Jesus is once again in Gentile territory. He heals a man and the people are astonished. When He heals in Jewish territory, the people are offended. It is clear that Jesus is setting up what will become explicit in the preaching of St. Paul, that the hardening of the Gentiles meant the blessing of the gospel to the nations.

In this scene, we have Jesus touching an unclean man's mouth with his own spittle. The man then becomes clean, healed and his ears are opened. Israel cannot hear Jesus or speak His Word.

EXHORTATION

Are you astonished with Jesus? Do you come to Him for food? Is that food to do the will of the Father?

Then do not be Pharisaical. A Pharisaical a response is one that is pleased with self even though there is no godly fruit. The way out of this is not through a morbid introspection. Even a good piece of fruit has blemishes. The way out of this is looking to Christ, trusting in Him, exhibiting faith. When you are connected to the root, good fruit is a necessity. So let the Word of Christ cleanse your heart that what flows out of you is the very thing He has planted deep in you; the love of God and zeal for righteousness.