

Follow – Walking in the Way of Jesus

Get Cleaned Up Mark 7

Pastor Darin – Saanich Baptist Church

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Darin's tragic story of how his cool jacket got stained

Get Cleaned UP...

The Pharisees come to Jesus with a question about ritual cleansing. They were very concerned not offend a holy God with their sin so over the years a whole list of rules cropped up about giving your hands, water pitchers and kettles a ceremonial ritual cleansing to keep God happy — or so they thought. They notice Jesus' disciples are not following the rules so they confront Jesus with an indignant question.

7 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?”

I. The Indignant Question (Mark 7:1-5)

Your mother told you since you were a little kid to “wash your hands before dinner.” That is not this — we are talking about ceremonial, ritual cleansing. Still involved water etc. but it was required by the traditions even if you had already just washed your hands. If you touched a dead animal or human being, if you were considered ritually impure, stained, and defiled, that meant you couldn't enter the temple—and therefore couldn't worship God with the community.

II. Human Tradition vs. God's Word (Mark 7:6-13)


Jesus has zeroed in on a tragic tendency that both Jews and Christians seemed to have. We take a good and clear Biblical command or idea and we add in our own stuff that God never intended. Jesus gives an example from the 10 Commandments — **“honour your father and mother”**.

“If anyone declares that what might have been used to help their mother or father is declared “dedicated to God” then you don’t have to spend the money to help your parents. And then Jesus pronounces a pretty stinging rebuke, **“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition.”** In other words — your made-up human rules have become more important than understanding and obeying what God says in the Bible.

III. Truth About Moral & Spiritual Purity (Mark 7:14-23)

Jesus took sin seriously, he shockingly states in Mark 9 **“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than have two eyes and be thrown into hell.”** What?! That’s seriously shocking! Is he serious??

Jesus is saying sinful behaviour (the reference to the hand) and sinful desires (the reference to the eye) are like a fire that has broken out in your living room. Let’s say a cushion on your couch has ignited. You cannot just sit there and say, “Well, the whole house isn’t burning, it’s just a cushion.” If you don’t do something immediately and decisively about the cushion, the whole thing will go up in flames.

That’s the entire problem with RELIGION as the Pharisees were practicing it. It was all outside  in stuff, keep all the external rules and that will do away with sin. And of course, Christians have a 2000 year history of turning the vibrant, Gospel centred faith of Jesus into RELIGION as well. Jesus pointed out the problem and then he turns out to be the solution. So how does the heart change? 2 Corinthians 5:21 (look it up in both NIV and the MSG).

Question: #1 – “Cleanliness Laws” aren’t a thing in Christian Churches but in our history we’ve created other lists. What are some you’ve seen or experienced in your life?

Question #2 – The example of Sabbath was used as a beautiful concept that some Christians in the past had layered some human tradition on top of. What’s your experience of taking a Sabbath day? Zhas it been life giving?

Question #3 – If you’ve followed Jesus for a long time you know the good news of the Gospel in your mind and heart. Even with that...we sometimes forget that we are forgiven and free. When do you find it difficult to believe the Gospel?