

Mark Part 13 - “Undefined” (7-20-25)

Main Text: Mark 7:1-23 (parallels: Matthew 15:1-20, not same story, but same theme: Luke 11:37-54)

Mark 7:1-2 (ESV)

[1] 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.

Note: The Pharisees gather, not to learn, but as skeptics looking to find fault, and undermine Jesus' growing influence. They take note of the unwashed, defiled (ceremonially unclean) disciples.

Mark 7:3-5 (ESV)

[3] (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, [4] and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) [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?”

Note: 2 Key things regarding God's Law and the Tradition of Men . . .

- **God's Law** - lots of the ceremonial cleansing laws had 2 key purposes:
 - **Practical** - Egypt, New Land (pagans), and Wilderness - laws were to keep them healthy and distinct!
 - **Presence** - the priests (and sacrifices) had to be “clean” and “pure” to enter the Lord’s presence. This points to the need for a Pure Priest and a Pure Sacrifice to Atone for sin and enter God’s Presence
- **Tradition of the Elders** - expounded upon, added to, and enhanced these laws from God, elevating the traditions of men to (and even above) the law of God.
- **Example:** The took the requirement of ceremonially cleansing of the priest to enter the holy place as a requirement on all people before they ate.

F.B. Meyer - The legal washing of hands before eating was especially sacred in the eyes of the Pharisees. “He who does not wash His hands before eating,” says the Talmud, “is as bad as a murderer.” Jesus had no sympathy with a system that reduced religion to a slavery to outward forms.

Mark 7:6-8 (ESV)

[6] 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; [7] in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ [8] You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

Note: Jesus calls it out - you are establishing your own authority, and in the process leaving the commandment of God. Now he gives them a specific example of how they do this . . .

Mark 7:9-13 (ESV)

[9] And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! [10] 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)— [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.”

Note: They came up with a catchphrase and practice (that seems to honor God) as a way to get out of their responsibility to care for their parents. “Corban” is a phrase that says what I would have given to you has already been given to God. Jesus says - you have many of these types of traditions!

Mark 7:14-15 (ESV)

[14] And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: [15] There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.”

Note: Jesus frees the people from external traditions of men, and brings them back to the heart of the issue!

Remember - Jesus started his response by quoting from Isaiah (29:13). Always take note of these!

Isaiah 29 - the people are blind and deaf to God's Word**Isaiah 29:13-14 (ESV)**

[13] And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, [14] therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”

Note: Their external practices and the teaching of their leaders are keeping their hearts from the Lord. Therefore, God says I'm about to flip the script!

Isaiah 29:15-16 (ESV)

[15] Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, “Who sees us? Who knows us?” [16] You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, “He did not make me”; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?

Note: When we substitute our traditions in place of what God has said, we put ourselves on the throne.

Isaiah 29:17-21 (ESV)

[17] Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? [18] In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. [19] The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. [20] For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, [21] who by a word make a man out to be an offender, and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and with an empty plea turn aside him who is in the right.

Note: A new day for God's people. The scoffers are exposed, and there is fresh joy for the meek!

Isaiah 29:22-24 (ESV)

[22] Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: “Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale. [23] For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. [24] And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction.”

Note: The Holy One is coming, and those who have gone astray in spirit, can have true understanding!

Mark 7:17 (ESV)

[17] And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable.

Note: This is the mark of a Disciple of Jesus - I seek him out for answers and explanations that I might better understand His Word and follow Him!

Mark 7:18-19 (ESV)

[18] And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, [19] since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

Note: Mark's Gospel is heavily influenced by Peter. Peter's Vision in Acts 10 - God makes all things clean.

Mark 7:20-23 (ESV)

[20] And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. [21] For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, [22] coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. [23] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Note: If you really want to talk about being defiled and unclean, then let's get to the heart of the matter. Your problem is much bigger than some small (or even quite large and heavy) external practices. You need to be cleansed from the inside.

Conclusion: Do not substitute traditions, and outward behaviors to keep us moral and pure. Instead let's allow the Lord to expose broken ways of living and thinking that keep our hearts defiled and in bondage.

If sin is in our heart, Jesus can and will purify us.

If my own religious activities are keeping me from an honest and open life before Jesus, I can be forgiven and live openly and honestly before God.

If I'm adhering to mindsets and beliefs that aren't from scripture, I can repent and yield to the Lord's perspective and not my own opinions, or the wisdom of the day.