

“Don’t Be A Pharisee (Grow 2021)”

Mark 7:1-23

Sermon Date: January 10th, 2021

Reflections on Sunday’s Sermon

By way of reminder, the first three sermons of each year we study the three words which define all that we do at Living Grace: “Worship, Grow, and Serve.” Last week Justin Anspach preached a sermon on “Worship” (you are strongly encouraged to listen to the sermon audio online if you were not able to be there - <https://www.livinggracebakersfield.com/sermons>). This week Pastor Brian will preach on what it means to truly “Grow” in our faith. We will be resuming our study in the book of John on Sunday, January 31st.

Prayer

As you begin your study this week, spend some time praising God for His immeasurable grace in both saving you and continuing the work of sanctifying you. Pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to expose any areas in your life that are Pharisaical and preventing you from experiencing true growth. As you pray, make the following words your own before the Lord (prayer taken from Prone To Wander: Prayers of Confession and Celebration by Barbara Duguid and Wayne Houk).

“Precious heavenly Father,

It is difficult to see the Pharisee within ourselves, and painful to admit how hypocritical and judgmental we really are. We see the sins of others with crystal clarity, yet are deceived and mesmerized daily by our own outward goodness. We excel at performing for the applause of a watching world, while ignoring and hiding the foul cesspool of wickedly sinful thoughts that dominate our minds for most of the day, every day. We lust, covet, and exalt ourselves constantly. We steal your glory by taking credit for your work in our lives, and create entire kingdoms in our imaginations where we are worshiped instead of you. In this we have offended your holiness and committed treason against you in every corner of our depraved hearts and minds.

Kind and holy Jesus, your glowing righteousness rescues us from our wickedness and greed. You never performed for others or lived to impress them. You were perfect in honesty and truth from the inside out, and even now your radiant goodness replaces all our sin and disobedience. In your perfection, you had every right to judge and humiliate sinners around you, yet you dearly loved the most sinful of humans and forgave them freely. Our guilt and treason were your undoing, yet even now you think of us with loving pity and unswerving devotion. Jesus, thank you for living and dying for each one of us.

Powerful Holy Spirit, put to death the Pharisee in our souls. Give us true and sober judgment about ourselves, and honest courage to admit what incredible sinners we really are. Convict us daily of our sin and of our goodness, of which we are so proud, and never let us escape from our need of a Savior. Help us to live a life of honesty before others, confessing our sin and asking for their help to see more clearly. Rescue us from the love of our own reputation, and change our hearts, we pray. Cause us to see Jesus daily, to love him deeply, and to become like him as we adore him in all his brilliant glory. Amen.”

Scripture

Mark 7:1–23 (English Standard Version) –

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. **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?” **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.”

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.”

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.” **17** And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. **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.) **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.”

Handling the Word

1. Since our passage for study this week is outside of our normal study in the book of John, take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the texts immediately before and after our passage in Mark 7. Write down anything you notice that helps you understand the context of Jesus' words in Mark 7:1-23.

Understanding and Applying

1. Our text begins with the religious leaders in Jesus' day (the Pharisees and Scribes) confronting Jesus about why the disciples did not wash their hands before they ate (vv. 1-5). Can you find any Bible verses that command the disciples to wash their hands before eating? Where did the religious leaders get this idea (see v. 4)?
2. Why is it so easy for them, and us, to add or make up new rules in order to try and be good religious people? What does this say about us and our understanding of the gospel? Can you think of specific rules that we have “added” to our version of Christianity?
3. At the heart of this issue of what to eat were the clean and unclean laws for food in the Old Testament. Take a moment to read Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, which speak of these laws. As you may know, food wasn’t the only thing God declared clean or unclean—almost every aspect of life had things that were clean and unclean, and most importantly, the priests and anyone who would come into the presence of God had to be “clean.” Clean things were essentially “holy” unto the Lord, and unclean things were “unholy” unto the Lord. What do you think God was trying to communicate to the people of Israel, with these clean and unclean laws, specifically about coming into His presence?
4. Here’s where the religious leaders got it all wrong: they had focused only on the external things in life that could make them clean or unclean and forgot all about their own hearts. They were washing all the time to make themselves “clean.” Jesus corrects this thinking in v. 15. Write down what Jesus means by this statement. How might we be guilty of the same kind of thinking? In what ways do we “wash” to make ourselves clean before God? Why doesn’t washing make us clean before God like we may hope?
5. Jesus makes his point clearer in vv.6-7. Write down a summary of what Jesus is saying in these two verses. As you ponder these two verses, does this ring true in your own life? Does the statement, “[They honor] me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (v. 6), have any truth to your life?

6. In v. 8 Jesus says to the religious leaders, “*You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.*” In what ways were they guilty of this? How might we be guilty of ignoring the clear commands of God’s Word and focusing more on our own traditions or interpretations of God’s Word? Can you think of specific examples?
7. Jesus makes it clear in vv. 14-23 that we are unclean and defiled by our very nature on the inside. Read these verses and write down what Jesus has to say about what comes from inside of us. As you read specifically vv. 20-23, how do these verses reflect what is truly in your heart? (Not what you want others to see, but what’s really there). Based on these verses, can you admit before God that your heart is unclean before God? What might you need to do to turn from sin and run back to Jesus?
8. The most radical statement in this passage comes at the end of v. 19: “*Thus he declared all foods clean.*” Based on your understanding of the Old Testament, and specifically of the food laws, why was this such a radical statement? What do you think Jesus means by this statement? (Look up Matthew 5:17 for a clue). What was the purpose of the law (Galatians 3:17-23), and how did Jesus ultimately fulfill the law (Hebrews 9:21-28)?
9. As you conclude your study this week, use what you already know to be true about God from His Word to spend a few minutes in prayerful worship of Him. While you pray, ask the Lord to continue to grow you in your understanding of Him and His grace in order that you might also grow in godliness and in your worship of Him this year.

“The gospel is consummately radical: a new birth, a new heart, a new creation, a resurrection! Apart from Christ, the world is desperately lost. It can only be redeemed by the shed blood of Jesus. There is no other way. We can polish the outside. We can educate ourselves. We can do ‘good’ things. But none of these things will really change us. We need Christ’s life.”

R. Kent Hughes