**Honor God with Your Heart**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Mark 7:1-11**

**Wednesday Evening**

**January 30, 2019**

**1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. 2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.**

Saints, another delegation came from Jerusalem to investigate this new rabbi who was causing such a stir throughout the country. The Pharisees and teachers of religious law were ready to debate Jesus about the fact that his disciples did not follow all of the laws of the Pharisees’ oral tradition.

**Colossians 2:7-12**

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

**Romans 8:29-31**

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Saints, as these religious leaders scrutinized Jesus and his disciples, they noticed that some of Jesus’ disciples failed to follow the usual Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating.

This referred not to washing for cleanliness, but to a particular kind of washing that made a person “ceremonially clean” before eating.

**3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.**

Saints, Mark explained this “ritual of hand washing” for his Roman readers. The Pharisees did not eat until they had performed a ceremonial washing where water would be poured over their cupped hands. They did this so that they would not eat with “defiled” hands, for they believed that they then would become defiled. They scrupulously followed this law, thinking that this ceremony would cleanse them from any contact they might have had with anything considered unclean.

The origin of this ceremonial washing is seen in the laver of the Tabernacle, where the priests washed their hands and feet prior to performing their sacred duties (Exodus 30:17-21).

**Exodus 30:17-19**

17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 18 "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, 19 for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it.

That was part of God’s law. But oral tradition extended this law to all Jews to be performed before formal prayers and then before eating. Thus, before each meal, devout Jews performed a short ceremony, washing their hands and arms in a specific way. But this was part of their ancient traditions, not a requirement of God’s law.

Jesus discerned that the Pharisees’ purpose was to keep up appearances, to demonstrate that they were not Gentiles, and to outdo the common people in priestly devotion. By their scrupulous observance of minute traditions and rituals, these religious leaders had completely lost their perspective on the reason the law of God had been given: to bring God’s Kingdom to earth, to provide reconciliation between God and his people, and to bring peace.

**4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.**

Saints, Mark explained this Jewish ceremonial cleansing ritual a bit further for his Roman audience. The religious leaders were aware that in daily business they might unknowingly come into contact with a Gentile or an unclean Jew and thereby become defiled.

If they were defiled, they would be unable to perform their religious duties. So they would not eat anything from the market before they had immersed their hands in water—another form of ceremonial washing. The devout leaders observed many traditions, including laws about how to wash their dishes.

There were laws for everything; no wonder the common people didn’t bother themselves with strictly following them. But the religious leaders kept all these laws because they believed their “cleanliness” equaled “godliness.” In their minds, keeping these laws showed their devotion and service to God. But Jesus could not have disagreed more.

**Luke 18:10-14**

10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

**5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"**

Saints, picking up from 7:2, Mark continued the narrative.

The religious leaders asked Jesus why his disciples did not follow the age-old customs, one of which was not eating without first performing the hand-washing ceremony.

Their underlying question was, “If you are really a rabbi, as holy and righteous and versed in the law as we are, then you should know that we don’t eat without first ceremonially washing our hands. That makes you no better than a common sinner, certainly not a rabbi whom all these people should be following!”

**6 He answered and 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 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' 8 "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." 9 And He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.**

Saints, Jesus did not answer their spoken question, but their underlying one, by quoting the Scripture that they claimed to know so well. First, he called them hypocrites.

**A hypocrite is one who makes judgment from under a cover**

The Pharisees pretended to be holy and close to God, thus judging all other people as sinners. But what they pretended on the outside was not true on the inside.

Saints, Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah. The Pharisees and teachers knew this Scripture. The prophet Isaiah criticized hypocrites (Isaiah 29:13), and Jesus applied Isaiah’s words to these religious leaders.

**Isaiah 29:13**

“Therefore the LORD said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men”

Saints, those pharisees might of said all the right words and give lip service to God, but their hearts were far from him. Jesus attacked their true heart condition.

**The problem:**

They replace God’s commands with their own man-made teachings and their own traditions. Their focus on minute rules of everyday life caused them to forget the scope of God’s law and what it meant for the people.

As leaders, they were especially culpable, for they should have been teaching the people about God. Instead, they looked down on the people as ignorant sinners and spent their time busily staying pure. Isaiah explained that their worship was a farce. They worshiped for appearances, not out of love for God.

**Matthew 23:13-33**

13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16 Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' 17 "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? 18 And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.'

19 "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? 20 Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. 21 He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. 22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 29 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. 33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

**Woe**

**Webster’s Dictionary Definition of Wow:**

grievous distress, affliction, or trouble: an affliction: Interjection an exclamation of grief, distress, or lamentation.

The word *woe* carries with it a tinge of sorrow. There is an element of imprecation, to be sure, but with it an element of compassionate sadness. The seven woes that Jesus pronounces on the religious leaders are solemn declarations of future misery. The stubbornness of the sinners to whom He speaks is bringing a judgment to be feared. The scribes and Pharisees are calling down God’s wrath upon themselves, and they are to be pitied.

**10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 11 But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"--' 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother…**

Saints, Jesus gave an example to illustrate how the tradition could be (and was being) used to negate God’s law. Jesus first quoted Moses, an especially relevant choice because the religious leaders traced the oral law back to him (see Deuteronomy 4:14).

**Deuteronomy 4:14**

“And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess”

Jesus chose an example about people’s duty toward their parents. One of the Ten Commandments, Honor your father and mother, states that people are to respect their parents in honor of who they are and what they have done. The commandment did not apply just to young children, but to anyone whose parents were living. Honor includes speaking respectfully and showing care and consideration.

The religious leaders knew Moses’ words, but they found a way to completely sidestep God’s command to honor parents. What Jesus described here was the practice of “Corban” (literally, “offering”) where a person could dedicate something to God for his exclusive use by withdrawing it from profane or ordinary use by anyone else.

Although the action—dedicating money to God—seemed worthy and no doubt conferred prestige on the giver, these religious leaders were ignoring God’s clear command to honor parents.

**Let's Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace." '**