

Mark 7:1-23 | Jesus Picking a Fight

Announce:

- Youth tonight
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 12:30pm
- “Windstorm: a study in the moves and manifestations of the Holy Spirit” Jan 5-9th 6-8pm

Jesus, the outlaw preacher, is stirring up a movement that is rocking the boat of the established religious order in Israel

Mark 6:56

Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.¹

When you begin to stir up the status quo, you disturb the peace. Jesus is a “disturber of the peace” and his movement, like any movement, creates fear in the established power structures.

Don't miss this: Christianity at its core, is not a religious movement but a revolutionary movement!

Philosopher and Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart has written, “Stated in its most elementary and buoyantly positive form, my argument is ... that among all the many great transitions that have marked the evolution of Western civilization ... only one -- the triumph of Christianity ... can be called ... a 'revolution': a truly massive and epochal revision of humanity's prevailing vision of reality...”

So states philosopher and Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart in his book "Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies" (Yale University Press, 2009, p. xi).

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mk 6:56). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus is about to pick a fight! Jesus is riding out on the battlefield against Posers, Pretenders, and Phonies

Mark 7

Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.

The Pharisees were the most prominent religious party during the late Second Temple period (100 BC—A.D. 70) and most frequently mentioned in the NT.

- Considered “the most accurate exegetes of the law” (Josephus)
- The root for Pharisee means “separate.” They are considered the most separate ones—avoiding anything unclean
- They put upon themselves a strict regimen, the minute detail of laws pertaining to purity, Sabbath observance, prayer, and tithing
- Essential to the Pharisees was the fact that they tried “by obedience to the Law...to represent the pure community, the true people of God preparing for the coming of the messiah”
- Scribes and Pharisees. Many Pharisees were also scribes. The two groups are often associated. The difference not being so much in beliefs but in training. A Pharisee was a layman without scribal education, whereas a Scribe was trained in rabbinic law and had official status.
- The Scribes and Pharisees observed and perpetuated an oral tradition of laws handed down from the former teachers. This oral law or Halakah, was highly venerated. They taught that it had been handed down from Moses and it was to be given the same respect as the written law of the Pentateuch
- This is illustrated by Shammai’s reply to the question, “How many Torah do you have?”: “Two, the written Torah and the Oral Torah”

- By strictly following Halakah through washings, fastings, purity, tithing, and prayer they sought fulfill the injunction of Lev. 11:44, *For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*
- Josephus says that they were so influential that virtually all of Israel followed their prayer and religious services. Even the Saducees had to follow many of their practices or they would not be accepted.
- Josephus describes the Pharisees as “a group of Jews priding itself on its adherence to ancestral custom and claiming to observe the laws of which God approves.”
- Our passage is very important in describing the Pharisees

Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. 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 (Halakah). 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. 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?”²

- A key word here is “walk” which is halak, which is derived from Halakah, thus the argument is that Jesus and his disciples “don’t walk according to Halakah” they “don’t walk with the traditions of the Church”

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mk 7:1–5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- The disciples were eating with “ceremonially” unwashed hands, which directly opposed the teaching of the Halakah, the oral tradition of the past teachers of Israel
- To the Pharisees and scribes, the Halakah, the tradition of the elders, was considered binding on the same level as scripture itself
- This washing had nothing to do with cleaning dirty hands but with a ceremonial rinsing. The ceremony involved someone pouring water out of a jar onto another’s hands, whose fingers must be pointed up. As long as the water dripped off at the wrist, the person could proceed to the next step. He then had the water poured over both hands with the fingers pointing down. Then each hand was rubbed with the fist of the other hand
- So really the issue wasn’t clean or unclean hands, like we parents get upset with our children about, but whether they had been “ceremonially cleansed” according to Halakah, the oral traditions of the elders
- But Jesus is about to pick a fight!

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.³**

- Oh my goodness! Jesus is picking a fight.
- Quoting Isa 29:13, Jesus condemns the Pharisees for being spiritual phonies
- He calls them hypocrites-a word originating from the Greek theater, describing a character who wore a mask

³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mk 7:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- They want to be seen men as being religious and spiritual. But their heart wasn't really in it
- Jesus is saying you are Posers, Pretenders, and Religious Phonies
- Ex. This is William Wallace riding out at Sterling to confront the English
- Ex. This is Hawkeye and his Mohican allies, Chingachgook and Uncas running up a mountain and confronting Magwa and his warriors
- This is Jesus taking on religious evil—dealing with posers, pretenders, and religious phonies

***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.” He said to them, “*All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.*”⁴

- The Pharisees believed that by outward religious exercises they could draw close to God
- They had replaced a broken and contrite heart with a thoughtless conformity to the traditions of man
- Not the written word of God but the oral traditions of man. They had lost the heart of God to follow the traditions of men
- When we lose the heart of God, intimacy with Jesus, we revert to traditions of religion that substitute our heart with outward exercises

⁴ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mk 7:7–9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- Jesus is saying “It’s vain!” Religion based in outward posing to appease God can’t change you!! Doesn’t change you!!
- Ex. you can come to church, go on mission trips, visit the sick, feed the poor, tutor the uneducated, but if you’re doing it to win favor, impress God and people, it’s all a waste of your time!
Vain.

For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is Corban*”—’ (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”⁵

- “Corban” was a Hebrew term, meaning “given to God.” It referred to any gift or sacrifice of money or goods an individual vowed to dedicate specifically to God. As a result of such dedication, the money or goods could be used only for sacred purposes
- So this became convenient for selfish decisions that one could back up with scripture taken out of context
- Ex. if a young man became angry at his parents, he could declare his money and property as “Corban” and since the scripture says that any vow made to God is binding (Num 30:2) his possessions could not be used for anything but service to God and not as a resource to help his parents
- Jesus condemned this practice by showing that that the Pharisees and Scribes were guilty of canceling out God’s Word and his command to honor his parents through their tradition

When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15 There is nothing that

⁵ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mk 7:10–13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”

- Spiritual defilement is not about food, drink, and what one puts into his mouth

When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?” And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”⁶

- This is what defilement means to Jesus—what comes from our heart, from within
- The heart is the issue
- **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”**
- Evil thoughts, adultery, sexual immorality, murders, stealing from others, coveting other people’s stuff, wickedness, being lewd, shameful behavior, an evil eye (an idiom for looking with jealousy or envy on what someone has)
- Ex. 10 months ago, being awakened by the Lord, “Seek me with your whole heart”...

⁶ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mk 7:14–23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- Jesus said that when we “love him with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, all of our strength, and our neighbor as ourselves,” that we fulfill ALL of the Law and the Prophets!
- The duty of love is the fulfillment of the Law! 32 words fulfill the Law (Mark 12:30-31)
- The Tradition of the Elders had added over 600 new laws. Jesus simplified the Bible to 32 words!!
- One four letter word: L.O.V.E.
- Jesus wants your heart more than anything else
 - **But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30⁷**
 - **As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you;⁸**
 - **For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those whose heart is loyal to Him.*⁹**
 - **Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life.¹⁰**

Conclusion:

We Bear the image of God as man and woman on our hearts. Men, you have a masculine heart, it is a reflection of God's heart. Your

⁷ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Dt 4:29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Ch 28:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (2 Ch 16:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Pr 4:23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

heart is the secret to your existence. Ladies, you have been given a feminine heart

All of your passions can only be found with your heart. You can only know God with your heart. Satan has stolen our hearts. We are devastated today. Something has been stolen and lost from us. Surrendered. If you want your life, you must find your heart

This is an Indiana Jones adventure. Looking for the REAL heart of God. – The deep heart He has put in us.

What would it look like to be a man whose heart is true, free? Jesus was the only real definition.

Ex. Malcolm Wallace looking at his son, William, “Your heart is free. Have the courage to follow it.”

Jesus is picking a fight with the Pharisees—he is a revolutionary! His heart is free.