

#### 4.21 / About the Heart / Mark 7:1-23

When is it alright to just go through the motions – let muscle memory take over and take you for a ride?

Familiar car ride / brushing teeth / mowing the lawn

Conversation with your spouse (or a close friend)? **Relationships.**

I think this relates with the passage we're going to examine today in Mark 7:1-23.

**V 1** Jesus in Galilee – Pharisees and TOL come from Jerusalem – almost 90 miles away - to see Him. –

**Illus. Kirby Risk**

Jesus is bringing a twist to the Jewish teaching about Yahweh.

**V 2-4** It's helpful to understand here that ceremonial washing was not about hygiene; it was about ritual distinction. The world can defile you and as a Jew who has a relationship with Yahweh, you must wash **away** the impurity of the world.

**Illus. Not me telling my boys to wash hands before dinner.** It's about observing Jewish law and remaining ceremonially undefiled.

**V 5** Reasonable question. **Illus. Not bowing in Japan – certain times/ways/situations. Curtis apology.**

**Even bow on phone.**

**Vs 6-8** Astonishing – **not a temperamental response but Astonishing**

"you hypocrites..." - To call the Pharisees and teachers of the law "hypocrites"... that's a big deal. He's saying, *you know and teach the law but don't live it*. They knew it (**regulations** that is) **better than anyone**. They patterned their life around living it out.

The Pharisees and TOL ask Jesus a reasonable question about a Jewish regulation that **He is breaking** and he responds by telling them that **they** are the real law breakers. Onlookers have got to be thinking, "where is Jesus going with this because... we all know that **He's** the one breaking the law right now and the Pharisees and TOL are **the law keepers**?"

Imagine what the Pharisees and TOL are taking in right now:

Hypocrite / far from God/ worship in vain /letting go of God's commands.

I'm pretty certain they've never received that kind of feedback. **This seems to be a pattern in the Gospel accounts.**

If He's wrong than, wow... this an offensive accusation. But if He's right... then this could be speaking the truth in love.

**V 9-13** (after 9) Intensity – millstone comment in Mt 18

You're regulations which aim/claim to help one follow the law actually contradict the law. This sounds preposterous but Jesus **brilliantly** gives an example that **clearly** makes His point. Hearers are certainly astonished on two levels:

1. Jesus is calling the Pharisees and regulations -lawbreakers
2. He seems to be right.

Has your spouse or a good friend ever pointed something out that you are clearly doing wrong but you didn't realize it? At first, in response, **you're stuck** between surprise/anger, considering a defense, owning your wrong.

**V14** While Pharisees and TOL are stuck, Jesus turns - addressing the crowd who is now listening, bringing them **all** into this **vulnerable** moment for the Pharisees and TOL.

**V15** This makes sense (**Illus. Water in a dirty pitcher**).

(*for a water pitcher*) The cleanliness of the inside is actually what is more important than the cleanliness of the outside. **Yet...** if this principle is applied to following God's law... it pulls the rug out from under a significant portion of Jewish rules and regulations.

**Jesus is saying that** *You and your regulations actually break God's law. Following God's law is less about the outside (the things you're doing) and more about how **clean you are on the inside**...* Mic drop... turn to go with disciples.

**V 17** Notice... Jesus stuns the Pharisees (**heart not law observance**) and turns to the crowd. Then he stuns the crowd (**heart not law observance**) and turns to his disciples who ask Him about this...

**V 18-19** Nothing that enters from the outside can defile a person because it doesn't go into their **heart**... (Isaiah) *honor with lips but **hearts** are far from me*. Jesus is interested in our **heart/soul** - essence of who we are and what we love.

The **disciples** (not unlike the Pharisees and many others) are **fixated** on the law and regulations. **Illus. Dog looking at the finger pointing**.

**In this way**, the disciples were being dull – focused on the pointing hand rather than what it is pointing to.

In an effort to peel their eyes off the law and the regulations, Jesus actually sweeps the clean/unclean food regulations right off the table. (*read vs 19*)

**V 20-23** Your heart is what matters. It always has been.

Heart/soul/essence of who you are and what you love. **When your heart is set on someone or something above God, do you know what comes out?** (*see verse 21-23*).

The Pharisees, TOL, and so many Jews were going through the motions, trying with varying levels of intensity to obey the rules and regulations. But their **hearts** were far from God.

**Are our hearts far from God? Where is your heart?**

Job, career, finances, school, kids, wife, friends, hobby, vacation, addiction...?

- Jews: *If I'm following the 613 regulations, what does my heart matter?*
- Today: *If I'm kind to the people around me, generally responsible, and not breaking any laws... what does my heart matter? **I just need to do the things and I'm fine.***

There are plenty of areas in life where going through the motions can work out alright for you... but not in **relationships**. This teaching of Jesus is about a **relationship** not a list of rules. That is a relationship with the Living God in the person of Jesus. This is astonishing teaching!

In all of the other ancient religions it was about a series of things you needed to do to please, appease or even manipulate the gods. Jesus is teaching something **astonishing** and new. His aim is not behavioral submission or compliance, His aim is our **hearts**. He wants to purify our hearts so we can **experience love** and peace with the Living God.

If I need to wash my hands, I can start washing my hands. **I can do that**. But if I need to wash my **heart**... what do I do?

I want us to feel their bewilderment and astonishment.

Jesus doesn't tell them **how** to wash their heart.

In the same way that your spouse/close friend can't tell you exactly what **to do** in order **to love** them.

Jesus is not spelling it out for us because that would create dependence on a list of rules. With this list of rules... I may just go through the motions - which might work in driving, brushing your teeth, or mowing a lawn... **but it doesn't** work in a **relationship**.

**Jesus wants a relationship with us. That's astonishing.**

Conclude with considering:

**Is your heart far from God?**