



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Don't Be a Hypocrite

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Mark 7:1-13

Clint Pressley

7 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."

(Pastor prays)

A man named Adoniram Judson is probably the most well-known missionary in history. You can find his story in a book called *To the Golden Shore*. We probably have it in our bookstore. *To the Golden Shore* is a great book that every Christian should read, whether or not you want to be a missionary. It's his biography. Adoniran Judson and his lovely wife Anne landed in Calcutta in 1812 and, from the very beginning, it was nothing but hardship. His life in Calcutta would be beset with hardship. He would be beaten, he would get malaria. He would contract some sort of pulmonary disease. He would almost starve. At one point, he served almost two years in a prison, and that didn't mean just sitting in a cell. They would put a chain around his ankles and hoist him up by his ankles and hang him upside down for almost two years. He served six years before he ever saw one person. He became a Christian, and in the course of his missionary career, he would bury three wives and multiple children. But it was after the death of his first wife, Anne—and maybe because of it – and after Anne died, six months later, their toddler daughter died. Adoniram said he was taken to the very edge of sanity. At one point, he had gotten to thinking so much of mortality and death that he dug his own grave and sometimes he would just go and lay and sleep in it. He said he almost, almost lost his faith. But he came to the realization that when he was not holding on to God, God was always holding on to him. He had a real faith. A faith not in his own ability to believe, but a faith in God's ability to keep. He had genuine faith in the wise and all good—supremely good— and loving God that holds us secure in Christ.

That's all ahead of us now. We get to Mark Chapter 7, and it's time to turn the page. Things have changed, and the direction and the Gospel of Mark has changed. If you've been with us for some time, we've been going through Mark. Mark Chapters 4-6 show us who Jesus is. Mark is writing to make sure that his hearers understand that Jesus is all God and all man. He answers the question, *Who is this that calms the storms and walked on the water and*

feeds the thousands? Who is this? In Chapter 7, the miracles are over. If this is your first time here, it's a good Sunday. You've caught us now as we turned the corner. This will be the beginning of the story of Jesus in the very last year of His earthly life here in Chapter 7. Jesus turns our attention to what is necessary, what is real. The miracles have stopped now. He'll start teaching about what lasts, what's going to hold you up when you feel like you are drowning and you think you're not going to make it. Look, we've got to get past religion and rituals and we've got to get to what is real. We need to work past culture and expectations, and even values, and bore down—dig down—into real faith.

Chapter 7 has a shift in tone. It's a shift in attention as we now begin to peer into the very soul of what it means to be a Christian. We will look into the soul of what it means to actually be a child of God. What does it mean to have real faith? I can give testimony to this:

Real Faith Will Always Get You Through

Let's do what we've been doing when we come to these long passages. Let's go back through it and just gently and quickly walk through and point out a couple of things in verses 1-13. And then after doing that, we'll just make some applications and make that the sermon. Join me there in Mark Chapter 7. We'll start in verse one, and just start walking through it and providing some explanation. Join me there, verse one: *Now, when the Pharisees gathered to him with some of these scribes, they came from Jerusalem.* The Pharisees were with the religious leaders of the Jews. The scribes were the scholars. They came from Jerusalem. It is about a 90-mile journey. In the car, it's about an hour and a half, but if you walk it, it's going to be six or seven days. They had something on their mind. They are not there to congratulate Jesus. The fame of Jesus has risen to the degree that those in Jerusalem were looking for a reason and a way to execute Him. They needed a crime. So it describes that the Pharisees have been dispatched to go and watch. Verse 2 tells us they get there and they saw that some of the disciples ate with hands that were

defiled, that is, unwashed.

Now, defiled or unwashed is not like what you and I might think about being unwashed. When we think about people washing their hands, they wash their hands because they don't want germs on their hands. We don't want to shake somebody's hands if there are germs. And a lot of you sitting here right now, you are so glad that we don't get up and greet your neighbor, or go shake hands. You're glad that that's over. COVID kicked that all the way out. Now I'm looking to get a fist bump out of people. That's not what they were talking about, the hygiene. They thought there was some religious significance to washing hands, and saw that Jesus' disciples didn't do it. Now, you'll notice in verses 3-4 that Mark gives us an explanation. This is how we know that the Gospel of Mark was written to the Romans, to Gentiles, because he's having to explain why the Jews did this. He gives the explanation: *(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, 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.)* It's like Mark saying, "Okay, you get the idea. It's a religious thing that they did." Then he brings us back to the story in verse 5. *And the Pharisees and the scribes [thus the scholars asked him] asked him, 'Why do your disciples [and, by implication, you] not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?'*" And, to them, Jesus is going to quote the Bible. I love the fact that Jesus will always make His argument from the Bible. He reaches over to the Old Testament, pulls up Isaiah chapter 29, and this is what He says: *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; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* This is about worship. This is about how you will understand God and how God works and how you know God. Jesus continues in verses 8 and following—"You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." *And he said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your*

tradition! [And then Jesus gives an illustration. This is a tragic illustration.] *For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother;' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'* Okay, this is the fifth commandment. It's an important thing. You'll find it in Deuteronomy. You'll find it in Exodus. It also has something attached to it that says honor your father and mother. Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. That's what God says, but Jesus says that these men say something different. *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)— *then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother,* And again, He explains that means dedicated to God. So the idea was you worked to a certain age and in that day and time there was no retirement plan. Your retirement plan was once you were not able to work anymore, your children would have set aside enough money so that they can take care of you. But there arose a tradition that the elder said, if you'll say that that money is dedicated to God—Corban—then you won't have to take care of your parents. So they were following the tradition of the elders, and by doing so, it had made them transgress the commandment of God. And Jesus is saying to these smart people, these leaders, these scribes and Pharisees, Don't you see that you have taken this idea of tradition to the point that it is now making you transgress God's law? Thus, making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.'" So then, in verse 13, He says that they do that and make the word of God void. They've made it void by their tradition. And there are all kinds of things that they're doing. Now, Jesus is getting to what it means to have real faith. Now, let's go back and see if we can make some applications. I'll start slow and we'll pick up speed. Here's the first one:

Real Faith Withstands Scrutiny

That's what verses 1-2 describe in the Pharisees. They had gone from Jerusalem to find Jesus. They went there because they wanted to watch Him. They wanted to trap Him. Christians live in glass houses. You live in a glass

house. Now, you can sometimes resent living in a glass house, you might want to pull the curtains. I would tell you do not pull the curtains. Polish the glass, and let the people look. Be scrutinized.

Jesus didn't hide, but He wanted to make sure that you have the right understanding. The Pharisees and the scribes, they came with their scrutinizing, spying eyes and they said to Jesus, *Why do your disciples not keep the tradition?* And then Mark explained in verses 3-4 that the Jews feel like they had to wash their hands as part of their tradition. Jesus is telling the Roman church that this is why this is such a big deal. It is because they've gone beyond the Law of God and now were following a tradition.

It's good for us from time to time to ask the question, *Why do we do these things as a part of tradition? What part is legalism? What part is worship? What part is important? What part is not?* It's good for us to be able to think about those things here at Hickory Grove. Why did we start the service this morning with the reading of the Bible? Why is the call to worship reading the Bible? Why do the songs, all of them, find their roots somewhere in Scripture as either a prayer to God or a song about God? Why, in the middle of our service, do we pause to have a prayer of confession? Why do we do those things? What is important in the life of a church's worship? What is not? Why do I have a tie on? Why does John Stegemerten not wear a tie? Does that even matter? The answer is no. It's good for us to think about what does matter and what does not matter. And that's the point that Jesus is going to make to these scribes and Pharisees. You're coming and asking questions about our tradition. That has nothing to do with God's Word. You see, real faith is able to withstand scrutiny. That's one thing. Let's pick up the speed a little bit. I'll give you a second point, number two:

Real Faith Hates Legalism

Let me show you where I get that. It's in verse 5. The text says that 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? You understand that this group is scrutinizing Jesus now. The question about legalism is a question that describes the Pharisees. They're asking, "Why do they not follow the tradition of the elders?" So let me pause here and ask, what is the tradition of the elders? If you want to do your own research, you can look up two words, *Mishnah*. It's from the Talmud. The Talmud is a collection of writings that serve as a commentary on the Old Testament. So you have the Bible, God's Law, and the scribes and the Pharisees would read it and then write a commentary to say that in order to keep you from breaking God's Law, you need to live like this. And over the years and into the centuries, they've added more and more to God's Law to help you not break God's Law. But in an effort to keep you from breaking God's Law, they started writing their own tradition, and that tradition became equal to God's Law. So much so that the Pharisees and the scribes said to Jesus, "Why are your disciples not following the elders?" They had taken tradition and raised it up to be equal with God's Law. And Jesus is going to bring them back to some sobriety here. Because it's not the tradition that matters. Look, tradition can be so healthy. We need to know the difference between *tradition* and *traditionalism*. We all have traditions, family traditions. College football started yesterday and there are all kinds of traditions that go with college football. It can be really healthy to build a culture, to have good tradition. It can make the place solid. We have our own traditions here. But *traditionalism* says, if you don't do this, then you are not really worshipping. And the question that the scribes and the Pharisees have for Jesus is not why are His disciples breaking God's law. That's not what they were asking. They had elevated their tradition up to the to the level of God's Law. They're asking, "Why aren't they following the rules?" In this case right here, it was why are they not washing. The only people who were required by God's Law to wash their hands before going into the Holy Place were the priests. Ordinary people weren't required to do that. It was the elders who said, well, if the priests do it, maybe the ordinary people should as part of the Law. That's binding. That's legalism.

What about legalism? Now, what is *legalism* today? *Legalism* is going to be when you major on the minors. When you major on the minors and you miss God. *Legalism* is when you elevate what is human above what is divine. And when you start elevating what is human over what is divine, you create a form of idolatry. You actually create a god that is not the God of the Bible. You see, in legalism, you can measure your own goodness. You can say these are the things that must be done in order for you to actually be a good person. And if you can keep those things, if you're a rule keeper or list follower, legalism is right up your alley because you can write down the things that must be done in order to be accepted by God. You do them, you're accepted. Isn't that what the story is about of the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer going up to the temple to pray? Isn't that what the Pharisee said? "Lord, I thank you that I am not like other people, extortioners and the unjust and adulterers or even like this tax collector over here. I have kept the rules. I fast twice a week, I pay tithes on all that I get."

You know what legalism is? Legalism is the enemy of grace. Because Legalism tells you here are the things that you need to do, and if you do them, you will have favor with God. That's not Christianity. That's karma. Karma is not Christianity. Karma says if you do bad things, sooner or later, that's going to catch up with you and bad things will happen to you. If you do good things, sooner or later, somebody will pay it forward to you. That's karma. That's not Christianity. Christianity doesn't have a bank where we are trying to invest enough good things in that bank that God's gonna let us in. We get the green light. That's not Christianity. Christianity says that all my righteousness is filthy rags. Christianity says there is nothing in me that makes it so that God should love me, and yet He does. Christianity says it is God's gift. It's grace. And certainly a grace found in Jesus, a grace found in His perfect life, His death on the cross so that I've been saved by faith in what Jesus has done for me.

I think there's a difference. Don't hear me wrong, I think there is a difference in legalism and living obediently. I think to pursue holiness, to live above reproach, to humbly try to honor God with your life is living obediently. That's not legalism. That's just obedience. If you're new to coming here to Hickory

Grove, let me try to explain Christianity with just a few short words. The Bible teaches that God has created all of us in His image. We respect you because you are made in the image of God. But the image of God in every human has been disfigured by our sin. There's not a person here who has not sinned. You've got a conscience. You know that you have committed sins. And when I say sin, I don't mean just bad choices or mistakes. I mean a willful crime. The way the Bible describes sin is it's a crime against God, this God who created you to have fellowship with Him. Sin is so heinous that it's not just something that causes sorrow, it causes separation. A Holy God will not have fellowship with sinful people because He is so holy and sin really is that bad. But the Bible teaches that God doesn't leave us in our sin. Here's the gospel; this is what the gospel is. The Bible teaches that God loved you to the degree that He gave us Jesus. You know John 3:16, here it is. He gave Jesus, who is fully God and fully man. Jesus had to be fully man because He's going to live in a way we can't. We live and don't have fellowship with God. Jesus lives perfectly, keeps all the laws, does so joyfully and maintains perfect fellowship with God the Father. So that—His righteousness that He has earned—what happens at the cross is that God judges our sin. Remember, the wages of sin is death. But He pours that judgment on Jesus. At the cross, Jesus takes the judgment for all the sin of every sinner that will ever be saved. So if you're going through something terrible, God is not judging you. If you're a child of God, God has already poured out judgment on Jesus at the cross. In addition to that, you not only have your sin taken away, you receive the righteousness of Christ. After the death of Christ on the cross, God raised Him from the dead. He did so on a Sunday, that's why we go to church on a Sunday, we celebrate this new life on Sunday, and that is a sign that God has received the sacrifice, and that forgiveness is granted. Now that's the information of the gospel. The way it becomes yours is that you believe that Jesus did that for you. And you trust in what Jesus has done—His life, His death on the cross, and His resurrection. That's how you get real faith. Real faith will withstand scrutiny. Real faith hates legalism because we love grace so much. I'm gonna give you a third thing to think of, number three:

Real Faith Loves the Word

What do I mean when I say the Word? I mean the Bible. One of the things that you'll find Jesus always doing is taking us back to what God has said in His word. How has God revealed himself? In verses 6-7, you see Jesus doing this. He quotes Isaiah Chapter 29, and He says that Isaiah spoke of hypocrites. Jesus says that Isaiah is talking about y'all. In verse 8, He uses the imagery of marriage. Jesus says, "You want to leave the commandment of God and you want to cling to the tradition of men. It's the same thing out of Genesis that a man will leave his father and mother and cling to his wife. He's saying that's what you're doing with the Bible. Or in verse 9 He says, *You've rejected the commandment of God. You've established the tradition of men.* Down to verse 13, He says, *You're going to take the Word of God and make it void. You're emptying it.* What is He saying? He's saying that any tradition, church tradition, family tradition, cultural traditions, weekend traditions, any of those must come under the authority of God's Word. It is God's Word that shows us who He is, how we are saved, and how He loves us. It shows you how to live, what to reject, and what to receive. Real faith loves God's Word. Let me give you a fourth thing about real faith, number four:

Real Faith Takes Responsibility

You got to think with me now to get through this one. In verses 9-13, to make His point here, Jesus uses an illustration from the day. It's one of the most egregious abuses of that day. I'm going to read it and explain it again. Join me there in your Bible, verse nine: "*And he said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! So here is the way they were doing that. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'*" It's the fifth commandment. It's one that every Jew knew. And why wouldn't you keep that? Well, here's what the tradition has done. *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)— then you no longer permit him to do*

anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.” So whatever money they have set aside, that was going to take care of their parents in their older years, what they have done now is they have set it aside to be dedicated to God. I’ve done some research on this. You could do that and not have to give it to the temple. You could just say you were doing that. And if the law of nature played out, your parents who are older than you, they’re going to die and you can keep that money. So, what was going on is that they were finding a loophole. You tell your parents, “Whatever you have gained from me, I’ve dedicated it to God.” Then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father and mother. He gets to keep that money. And by doing that, what you’ve done is allow that person to actually break the fifth commandment of honoring your father and mother. You’ve made that person a commandment breaker. And Jesus exposes how these legalistic scribes and Pharisees were leading people by their tradition, to break the Word of God. And what Christ has said to the people is that God’s commandment points us to responsibility. That if you’re a child, you honor your father and mother. You take care of them. You don’t find loopholes. Real faith takes responsibility. I’d like to give you just one last one. Here’s the fifth point, number five:

Real Faith Hates Hypocrisy

This is in verses 6-7. If you’re a Christian, you know this. Maybe the most insulting thing to be called would be to be called a hypocrite. Even the Greek word, *hypocrite*, means play actor. I mean the word *hypocrite* is still active in our culture. We still use it. Look at the passage in verses 6-7. Jesus—He quotes Isaiah—right there verse 6, He uses two parts of the body: the lips and the heart. “*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; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”’*” We understand that comparison. I mean, you can hear that in our colloquialisms today. You might hear somebody say, “Talk is cheap.” Or we used to say, “He talks the talk, but does he walk the walk?” You know what is being said here, in Isaiah 29:6. The question is, is their

Christianity real or are they hypocrites? And we find this all throughout the church. People joined the church, being baptized, you used to walk the aisle and be here, and then gone, Your name is on a roll but there's no evidence whatsoever. That's not Christianity. Some sort of weird, easy belief, cultural Christianity. That's not real Christianity. Christianity is this real faith that bores down into who you are. We don't look at the outward appearance. It gets into the church in an insidious way. If you've gone to church for any amount of time, you have had people come into your life that you really thought were solid Christians, they presented all appearances, but they were hypocrites. The Bible teaches that God looks at the heart. Isn't that what the Lord said to Samuel when he was trying to establish a king for Israel? He will finally come up with David, but before he sees David, who is a shepherd boy, he sees Eliab, who's tall and strong with a square jaw. And Samuel thinks, well, that guy looks like a king. And the Lord speaks to Samuel and the Lord says to Samuel, *"The Lord doesn't see as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance. The Lord looks at the heart."* The scribes and the Pharisees here talking to Jesus, they were obsessed with the outward ceremonial cleanliness. And Jesus is saying to them that all of that religious nicety doesn't have any value compared to the heart. He's telling the Pharisees and the scribes that their worship is useless. It's a failure because it doesn't come from the heart.

That's what I want for you. A heart that is surrendered to God in Christ. No matter the cost. No matter the inconvenience. A heart and a life that is gripped with real faith. Because real faith will always get you through.

(Pastor prays)