

“Holiness and Righteousness from God”

Mark 7:14-23

Holiness and righteousness misguided

1. The context of ceremonially washing (vv. 3-5) and clean vs. unclean food (vv. 15, 18-19)
 - a. Exodus 30:19-21 required priests who served in the tabernacle to wash their hands.
 - b. The law also required priests to consider the portion of food they were allowed to eat from the sacrifices as holy. They and their household could eat this food only when ceremonially clean (Num. 18:8-13).
 - c. Pharisees took these laws and applied them to everyone, not just the priests, and to all food, not just that which was sacrificed. They were seeking holiness above what the law actually required.
2. Why would these traditions possibly become applied to the whole community?
 - a. Trying to help the people in practical ways know how to preserve the holiness and righteousness God required.
 - b. To help the people of God keep their distinction amongst a godless culture.
 - c. To help maintain a sense of control – “Show me what to do and I will do it.”
 - d. To help draw a distinctive line around a rule or principle so as not to come close to breaking God’s original command. They were taking biblical principles and then filling in the gaps with their own interpretations and applications but making them equal with God’s commandments.
 - i. Example - The *mutzkeh* (off limits) rules
3. What can happen to a community that loves their traditions above a heart for God?
 - a. It can create a false sense of righteousness based upon perceived holy behavior.
 - b. It can exclude those that God would have it reach...the unclean, the outcast, the marginalized, etc.
 - c. It can become immovable, afraid of change, skeptical of differences.

[Application] What traditions, rules, or code of conduct do you personally, maybe even subconsciously, use to define your holiness and righteousness?

Holiness and righteousness unattainable

1. It is not outward behavior or outward religiosity that makes us holy (vv. 15, 18-19).
2. What comes out of the heart demonstrates the state of our righteousness or lack thereof (vv. 15, 20-23).
 - a. Evil thoughts – “bad inner dialogues” (vv. 21-22)
 - i. Deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness
 - b. Sinful actions (vv. 21-22)
 - i. Sexual sin, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness (malicious acts)
3. Addressing the symptoms without dealing with the root cause is dangerous.
 - a. Jesus main point is that uncleanness is moral not ceremonial or ritual. (v. 23)
 - b. Focusing solely on behavior modification is anti-gospel.

[Application] Do you base your righteousness on what you do and don’t do? What you do and don’t drink?

1. Parents are you more concerned with the behavior of your children than you are asking the “why” questions to get at their heart?
2. We could outlaw every “bad thing” and mandate every “good thing” and that still wouldn’t change our hearts.

Holiness and righteousness imputed

1. Imputed – when God sets aside the punishment that we deserve and treats us as if we had always been righteous. How?
2. We are given new hearts, new life, through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - a. He fulfilled the law and the traditions that we could never fulfill.
 - i. He constantly demonstrated that the traditions and laws pointed to him and that they should not take priority over him. (Mark 2:23-28 – Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath; Mark 3:1-12 – healing on the Sabbath; Galatians 3:21-24; Matthew 5:17)
 - b. He became ceremonially unclean on our behalf.

- i. Mark 1:31 – healing a sick woman; Mark 1:41 – healing the leper; Mark 5:1-20 – healing the demoniac; Mark 5:28-30 – healing the woman with the hemorrhage; Mark 5:41-42 – raising Jairus’s daughter; Mark 6:53-56 – healing at Gennesaret
 - ii. We receive his righteousness as he takes on our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- c. He ushers in a new kingdom through his death and resurrection.
 - i. Those with faith in Christ now have his holiness and righteousness.
 - ii. Holiness and righteousness is moral (heart-based) not ceremonial or religious.
 - iii. True righteousness from Christ leads to lasting change.

[Application] Will you recognize that Jesus Christ is your only hope for restoration, for purity, for holiness, and righteousness before God?