

Mark 7:1-13  
God Honors Pure Hearts  
5/28/22

**ILL:** An **Army Officer**, who had just been promoted to the rank of **Colonel**, was sitting at his desk glancing proudly at the “**birds**” on his shoulders.

Now, a **Private** walked in through the open door of the Colonel’s new office, saluted, and was about to speak when the Colonel said, “**Just a minute, soldier. I must make an important telephone call.**”

So, he dialed a number and said, “**Hello, General Doyle. I’m returning your call. Sir, you want me to meet w/ you and 3 other generals? Today at 1400? Yes Sir, I’ll be there.**”

Putting down the receiver and w/ a **smug** expression on his face, the Colonel turned to the Soldier and asked, “**Now, private, what can I do for you?**”

The Private swallowed hard and said, “**Sir, I’ve been ordered to hook up your telephone, Sir.**”

RN: Does **Pretense** ever really pay off? When the chips are down, doesn’t the **Truth** always come out? And, can’t the consequences of Pretense, sometimes not only embarrass us but also damage our lives for many years afterwards

AN: No, never, not in a million-billion years will the Pretense AKA **Hypocrisy** ever pay off, b/c God expects us to commit our lives to His Truth—honestly, sincerely and purely.

**BI: Pure** hearts honor God’s commandments above religious traditions, so God honors **sincerity**, not **hypocrisy**. **Please turn in your Bibles to Mk 7:1-13.**

I. Today, we’ll see why the Pharisees confront Jesus about **impurity**.

II. And, we’ll see how Jesus **judges** the Pharisees.

III. Finally, we’ll see what Jesus cites to **back up** His judgment.

God honors pure hearts. [PRAY]

*In 7:1-13, Mark returns to the conflict b/t Jesus and the Bigwigs. And, Mark stresses how much they reject Jesus despite His popularity w/ the Crowd. As such, Mark prepares us to see why Jesus goes to the Gentiles. But, Mark’s also prepares us to see the kind of morality that pleases God: Truthful and Gracious acts from pouring from our hearts, not deceitful and cruel words dripping from our lips.*

(TRN) In (1-4), the Pharisees confront Jesus about His Followers’ **impurity**.

**Mark 7:1-4 (NASB95)** <sup>1</sup> *The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem,* <sup>2</sup> *and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed.* <sup>3</sup>

*(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, [thus] observing the traditions of the elders; <sup>4</sup> and [when they come] from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)*

**(1-2)** Some **Bigwigs** and **Lawyers** from **Jerusalem** come to check up on Jesus at **Capernaum**. And, they see some of His Followers eating w/o washing their hands.

A. So, the Bigwigs and the Lawyers blow a gasket! Now, it's not b/c Jesus' Followers missed the hygiene section of **Mrs. Levine's** health class in high school.

1. The Bigwigs and Lawyers are bent out of shape, b/c Jesus' Followers aren't going through a washing ritual that's part of **their traditional** take on the Law.

2. IOW, Jesus' Followers have eliminated a ritual that loyal Jews see as the heart of goodness and service to God. For them, to **not** wash b/f eating is to sin against God, b/c it leaves you **impure** in a ritualistic sense, not an unsanitary sense.

B. The concepts of "**cleanliness**" and "**impurity**" are hard concepts for us to understand, b/c they're very fuzzy. But, you can think of ritual "cleanliness" this way:

1. It's like staying away from someone whom people suspect of committing a crime, b/c you don't want to be seen as guilty by association. (Also, what is normal.)

2. But, ritual "**impurity**" is like being seen in some sense like this person under suspicion. You can also look at these concepts this way (abnormality):

3. Practically speaking, the **OT** rules about cleanliness, such as food laws and ritual purity, make up a code of conduct that marks the Jews as **God's Chosen People**, who are separate from the World.

4. It's like this for us: You expect Christians to be squeaky clean in their business dealings, b/c they're Christians. IOW, our beliefs should shape our behavior.

**(3-4)** These verses describe how washing rituals work out in real life. Mark writes for **Gentile Christians** like us who may have no idea what he's talking about.

A. Now, the "**traditions of the elders**" are customs passed down from one generation to the next, and they help loyal Jews keep the Law in practical ways.

1. IOW, the **Oral Traditions** try to explain **how** to obey God's commands—down to the smallest details of life. So, the Oral Traditions control every part of Jewish life.

2. The Jews of Jesus' day—and even many observant Jews today—follow them to the letter. And for many Jews, these traditions are as binding as the Law.

B. Now, washing your hands w/ a little water b/f you eat is the most common ritual washing. And, this washing is really important after a Jew goes to the marketplace.

1. In the marketplace, a Jew can come in contact w/ "impure" people like **Gentiles** and "impure" things like money or tools.

2. And, when Mark talks about washing cups, pitchers, and pots, he's giving more examples that show just how important and detailed ritual washing is to loyal Jews.

**C. ILL:** Many years ago, a village **Judge** and jury convicted **2 Brothers** of stealing sheep. So, according to tradition, the **Villagers** branded the **2** brothers on the forehead w/ the letters "**ST**" that stood for the words "**sheep thief.**" The **Older Brother** couldn't bear the shame, so he became bitter and moved away. Eventually he died, and people **forgot** about him. But, the **Younger Brother** made a **different** choice. He said, "**I can't run from what I've done. So, I'll stay here, follow Christ, and win back my self-respect and my neighbors' trust.**"

As the years passed by, the Younger Brother built a solid reputation for his **Integrity**. Then, **1** day, when this Brother had grown very old, a **Stranger** saw him, and asked a Villager about his branded forehead. The Villager said, "**It happened a long time ago. I forgot why. I think the letters stand for 'saint'.**"

**D. APPL:** Jesus' teachings on Integrity give us a real code of conduct that marks us as His Chosen People and reproduce His morality in us.

Jesus can produce **Integrity** in us, b/c God honors pure hearts.

(TRN) In (5-8), Jesus **judges** the Pharisees' motives.

Mark 7:5-8 (NASB95) <sup>5</sup> *The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?"*

<sup>6</sup> *And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"* <sup>8</sup> *"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."*

**(5)** The Bigwigs and the Lawyers take Jesus to task, b/c He's responsible for His Followers' conduct. So, they ask Him what's up w/ their failure to honor tradition.

A. The Bigwigs think that there's a bigger problem here than not washing your hands. There's the possibility that Jesus' and His Followers are **against** the **Law** itself.

**(6-8)** But, Jesus quotes **Is 29:13** from the **LXX** (Grk trns 3-1 BC), and He applies it to the Bigwigs in a stern, harsh, and sarcastic way—He even calls them **"hypocrites."**

A. IOW, the Bigwigs' show of religious loyalty is just that—a **big, fat, greasy show**. They **don't believe** what they're preaching. And, the traditions are just a way for them to **manipulate** the people in God's name and look good while they're doing so.

1. Their religious Pretense is an extension of the **mixed motives** that rule their hearts, b/c in their **impure** hearts, they give God no sincere Love or Worship.
2. On the contrary, they worship **themselves** in pride and greed. So, no matter how many times they wash their hands, their hearts are still filthy, smelly, maggoty garbage.
3. And, just like the Jews of **Isaiah's** day, the Bigwigs and the Lawyers are **swapping** the rules of God for the rules of men. And as such, they're feeding God's people spiritual rotten eggs instead of spiritual steak and potatoes.

**B. ILL:** An old **Vagrant** would sit slumped over in his seat while the sermon was being preached in a **NY Rescue Mission**. But, when the speaker made a slight mistake in quoting a Scripture, the old **Derelict** would immediately straighten up, cite the exact reference, and correct the preacher's wording. The **Mission Workers** called him **"Old Chapter and Verse."**

Now, Old Chapter and Verse knew a lot of Bible verses. And, he heard many sermons, but he **never** changed his way of life.

A **Pastor** who had read about "Old Chapter and Verse" was reminded about him when a **Young Man** carrying a big Bible told him he didn't preach **"hard enough."** What's more, the Young Man said, **"My pastor really lets us have it!"**

This Young Man liked to hear the Truth **shouted**, but it **never** changed his life. He made life so miserable for his **Wife** that she left him, and his **Fellow Workers** lost respect for him, b/c he was **pious hypocrite**<sup>iii</sup>.

**C. APPL:** Hypocrisy proves that moral confusion rules a person's pretentious heart. But, **if** we choose to **sincerely** honor God, **then** His moral clarity reorders us.

Jesus can produce **moral order** in us, b/c God honors pure hearts.

(TRN) In (9-13), Jesus cites the **Law** to back up His judgment.

Mark 7:9–13 (NASB95) <sup>9</sup> *He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition." <sup>10</sup> "For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER*

*OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH';<sup>11</sup> but you say, 'If a man says to [his] father or [his] mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),'<sup>12</sup> you no longer permit him to do anything for [his] father or [his] mother;<sup>13</sup> thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."*

(9) Jesus charges the Bigwigs and Lawyers again w/ swapping God's Law for men's rules. Jesus says, "**Don't you have a fine way of regularly swapping your opinions for God's Commandments?**" And, He cites the **5<sup>th</sup> Commandment** to back up His criticism.

(10) In **Ex 20:12** and **Dt 5:16**, God commands Israel to care for their elderly parents. **READ THAT** in the **5<sup>th</sup> Commandment**, God orders Jewish sons (and daughters) to support their elderly parents financially and practically.

A. In the ancient world, the eldest son is **Social Security, Medi-Care**, a retirement home, a pension, and a senior citizen's emotional support system all rolled into one.

1. In fact, during **OT** times, the Law takes this responsibility so seriously that sons who neglect their parents can suffer the **death penalty** (Ex 21:17; Lv 20:9).

2. So, God wants His people to see—**plainly**—that no callous adult or even heartless nation will escape His judgment if they cast aside their elderly parents

B. Today, many financial and practical elements of the Golden Years have changed. But, one fact never changes—God orders adult children to watch over **Nana and Papa**.

1. IOW, there are no disposable people in God's sight; sometimes, there are only people whom no one cares about except Him.

(11-12) Then, Jesus cites a legal **tradition** that allows some men like the Bigwigs and the Lawyers to dodge this fearsome 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment. They call it the law of **Corban**.

A. Corban is like willing your entire estate in an irreversible trust to a university after you die. You can control your estate until you die, but it really belongs to the school.

B. Now, when a man calls all his moolah and all his means "Corban," he's saying that every dollar and doily he owns belongs to God.

1. IOW, he dedicates all his moolah and all his means to the **Great Temple** w/ a vow written in stone.

2. The only exception is this: Sometimes, some priests are willing to bend the rules if a man is willing to pay the priests an arm and a leg to get his moolah and means back.

C. Now, the man who's made the Corban vow can only use his moolah and means for "**religious purposes.**" And, the Lawyers cite **Nu 18, 30; Lv 27** to say that this Corban vow even **trumps** the man's obligation to his **Nana and Papa**.

1. IOW, since this man now has **holy** moolah and **holy** means, Mom and Pop are out in the cold, b/c they can't claim their son's help. So, their hope for help goes up in **holy smoke**.

D. As such, the Bigwigs, the Lawyers, and the stingy scions make God take the fall for their phony, two-faced, double standards.

**(13)** Jesus comes down on the Bigwigs and the Lawyers like the **thundering, flashing, rock-melting** voice of God at **Mt Sinai**. *Here's why—*

A. They're using God's name to justify their hatred for their at-risk parents and their love for impure money. So, Jesus is vein-poppin', eye piercin', voice crackin' mad!

1. The Bigwigs scratched out the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment in their hearts and spray-painted dollar signs in its place. And in the process, they **betrayed** their parents.

B. Now, this is just one example of how they **pervert** God's Word to commit their impure crimes against God and humanity.

1. But, Jesus isn't against traditions **if they bow** the knee to God's Word and now point people to God's **uprightness** and His Truth about **selfishness**.

2. IOW, traditions are good **if** they help us love God w/ **all** our heart, **all** our soul, and **all** our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves (**Mt 22:37-40**). But, **if** they don't, then, traditions aren't worth the **impure hypocrisy** that they're printed on.

**C. ILL:** A local **Christian** charity realized that the town's **most successful Lawyer** had **never** given a donation. So, the **Officer** in charge of contributions called him and encouraged him to contribute. She said, "**Our research shows that out of a yearly income of at least \$5,000,000, you don't give 1¢ to charity. Wouldn't you like to give back to the community in some way?**"

The Lawyer mulled this over for a moment and said, "**1<sup>st</sup>, did your research also show that my mother is dying after a lingering illness and has medical bills that are several times her annual income?**" Embarrassed, the Officer mumbled, "**Um, no.**"

The rich Lawyer went on: "**Did your research show that my brother, a disabled veteran, is blind and confined to a wheelchair?**" Thoroughly

embarrassed, the Officer began to stutter out an apology, but rich Lawyer interrupted w/ his voice rising in indignation, **“Does your research show that my sister’s husband died in a traffic accident, leaving her penniless w/ three children?”** The humiliated Officer, completely beaten down, simply said, **“I, I had no idea . . .”**

Finally, the Lawyer cut her off and said: **“So, if I don’t give them any money, why should I give any to you<sup>iv</sup>?”**

**D. APPL:** God **expects** us to use our means to help “disposable” people b/c, there are no worthless people in His sight, only people He **holds dear**.

Jesus can produce **Compassion** in us, b/c God honors pure hearts.

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<sup>i</sup> “Pretense,” INFOsearch Pro ver 4.3P.

<sup>ii</sup> “Sheep Thief or Saint? Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> “Learn to Obey,” Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Pastor’s Listserver.

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