

The Gospel According To Mark

Part Eleven

Mark 6:53-56 [New King James] *“When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. 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.”*

Just sometimes Jesus Christ must have looked at the crowd and wondered if there was any among them who did not come to get something from Him.

The crowd came with insistent demands, just to use Him.

Many people have this same attitude of mind –

Young people especially use their parents' home for their comfort and convenience, seldom making contributions towards its running.

Some people use their friends in this way, regarding other people as existing to help them when they need help.

Some people use the Christian Church in the same way, to baptise their children, to marry their young people and bury their dead. They are seldom seen in the congregation unless there is some service they need.

There are even those who seek simply to make use of the Creator God. They never remember God unless they need Him, their only prayers are requests, even demands, for His help in healing or financial troubles.

If we examine ourselves honestly, to some extent we are guilty of this attitude of mind.

It would please our Creator God far more if we offered Him our love, our service, our devotion and our thanks, [**Colossians 2:6-7; Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 5:20**].

Mark 7:1-4 [New King James] *“Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. 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. 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.”*

Originally the law means two things to the Jew, first and foremost the Ten Commandments and second the five books of the Old Testament called the Pentateuch.

The Pentateuch does contain a number of detailed regulations and instructions, but mainly a series of moral principles.

For many generations the Jews were content with this but in the fourth and fifth centuries before Jesus Christ, a group of legal experts called scribes, formed.

These men had a passion for definition and expanded the great principles in the Pentateuch into thousands of little rules and regulations governing every action and possible situation in life.

Jewish life was no longer governed by God-given principles but by a multitude of rules and regulations.

These rules and regulations were not written down until after the time of Jesus Christ, but were called the Oral Law, this is what is meant by the tradition of the elders [referring to the great legal experts of the old days, like Hillel and Shammai.]

Later a summary of these rules and regulations were written down and is known as the Mishnah.

Among these many rules and regulations were how ceremonial washing was to be done, before a meal and between each course.

This is what Jesus Christ was “*up against.*”

To the scribes and Pharisees these rules and regulations were the essence of religion.

Mark 7:5-8 [New King James] “*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?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: “This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” 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.’*”

The scribes and Pharisees demanded to know why the disciples of Jesus Christ did not observe the traditions of the Oral Law in regard to washing hands before and during meals.

Jesus Christ responded by quoting to them a passage from **Isaiah 29:13** and accused them of hypocrisy.

The Greek word used was “*hupouritēs*” basically means one who answers a stage actor who in Greek and Roman times spoke to the audience from behind a mask.

Refers to a person whose whole life is a piece of acting without any sincerity behind it at all.

A person whose religion is the carrying out of certain external rituals, rules and regulations, no matter what their heart or thoughts may be.

Such people’s life does not depend on listening to the Creator God as He speaks to them through His Word, the Christian Bible.

True religion, worship of the Creator God, can never be the product of a person’s mind, but the simple listening and accepting the very Word of God.

Mark 7:9-13 [New King James] “*He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, “Honour 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.’*”

The exact meaning of this passage of scripture hinges on the word “*corban*” meaning an offering or a consecrated present [to the temple].

But this word can be used in a very shrewd way.

For example, a creditor might have a debtor who refused or was unwilling to pay. The creditor might then say “*the debt you owe me is corban,*” that is to say, “*the debt you owe me is dedicated to God.*”

From then on the debtor ceased to be in debt to a fellow man and began to be in debt to God, which was far more serious.

In such an event it was to introduce a kind of religious blackmail, which transformed a debt owed to a person into a debt owed to God.

This passage of scripture indicates this misuse of the idea of “*corban*,” to avoid helping the parents who were in need.

Jesus Christ was attacking “head on” the system which put rules and regulations before the claim of human need.

The commandment of God was that the claim for human need must come first expressed in love and compassion.

The scribes placed the keeping of rules and regulations first.

Mark 7:14-15 [New King James] *“When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, ‘Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that 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.’”*

This very short statement must have shocked the scribes and Pharisees. As they interpreted the dietary laws as found in Leviticus chapter eleven, they believed they were clean before God because of what they refused to eat.

Jesus Christ pointed out that is what came out of a person’s heart and mind that make a person defiled.

Mark 7:16 [New King James] *“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

These words were used only by Jesus Christ who spoke with divine authority, [Matthew 7:29] and on earth only on seven distinct occasions in order to emphasise and call attention to the utterance He had just made.

This is an important example of the figure of speech polyptoton, the repetition of the same verb in a different inflection, by which great emphasis is put upon the injunction given.

Other times when Jesus Christ used this figure of speech are recorded in **Luke 8:8; Matthew 11:15; Matthew 13:9, 43; Mark 4:23; Luke 14:35** and here in **Mark 7:16**.

Mark 7:17-23 [King James] *“And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”*

The list of what can be generated in the mind and heart of a human being is frightful.