

(Through the Bible) Mark 6-7

by Chuck Smith

Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth, where he is rejected by his family and community, and he teaches about the importance of faith, healing, and rest.

Duration: 1:22:30

Scripture: Mark 6:7-11, Mark 7:37 - 8:9, Mark 16:15, Luke 10:10-12, Luke 12:47-48, James 5:14-15

Topics: "Miracles Of Jesus", "Prayer And Compassion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jesus walking on water and feeding the multitude. He emphasizes the significance of the fourth watch of the night, which is from 3 o'clock to 6 o'clock in the morning, when Jesus observed his disciples toiling and rowing against the wind. The preacher suggests that Jesus may have had a sense of humor as he walked on water and pretended to pass by his disciples. The disciples initially thought Jesus was a ghost, but he reassured them and calmed the wind. The preacher also highlights Jesus' compassion for the people, seeing them as lost sheep in need of a shepherd, and how he miraculously fed the multitude with just a few loaves and fish. The sermon concludes with a call to spend more time in prayer and to have a deeper relationship with God.

Transcript

Shall we turn to Mark's Gospel, chapter 6. Jesus had been in the city of Capernaum, there on the northern part of the Sea of Galilee, and he has just brought back to life the daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue there in Capernaum. Now he is leaving Capernaum, and with his disciples he is returning back to his hometown of Nazareth. It's probably 30 to 35, well maybe 40 miles from Capernaum to Nazareth.

And so he went from thence, the thence would be Capernaum, the Sea of Galilee, and he came into his own country, that is his hometown of Nazareth, and his disciples were following him. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? So they were astonished, or the word in Greek is skandalon, they were stumbled by him, because they knew him.

And they said, Where did he get all of this? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary? The fact that he is referred to as the son of Mary would indicate that Joseph was already dead. Chances are that Joseph died rather early, and that Jesus stayed at home until he was 30 years old, in order to provide for the

family. At the death of his father, he would have had to have been the family provider.

Now, this word carpenter is in the Greek an artificer. Actually, he was the kind of fellow that no matter what you needed done, just a handyman. He could make anything from scratch.

So anything from building a little shed to building a house. He was just one of those men skilled with his hands and was capable of doing just about anything. And he no doubt remained at home until the rest of his younger brothers and sisters were able to be out on their own.

And so they said, Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Jude and Simon? And are not his sisters with us? And they were offended, scandalized. Well, that would be a literal interpretation, a transliteration of the Greek word skandalon. He was a stumbling stone.

It means a stumbling stone. They were stumbled at him. Because they knew him.

And Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country and among his own kin and his own house. So there's an implication there that even his own brothers, his own kin did not really honor him his own house. But he's not without honor.

He goes elsewhere to get honor. But in his own country, they don't recognize him. They refuse to recognize him because they know him.

And he could do there or he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid hands upon a few sick folk and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.

He didn't do many marvelous works there in Nazareth simply because of the unbelief. The unbelief kept them from coming. Had they come, surely they could have been healed.

But he just laid his hands upon a few of the sick folk. But there wasn't any marvelous miracles wrought there in Nazareth as there had been around the Sea of Galilee. And he went around the villages there teaching.

And he called unto him the twelve. And he began to send them forth two by two. And he gave them power over unclean spirits.

And he commended them that they should take nothing for their journey. Only their walking stick. But they were not to take any script or bread or any money in their purses.

They were to be shod with sandals. But they were not to take two coats, two outer garments. And he said unto them, in what place soever you enter into a house, there abide until you depart from that place.

And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, just shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. And verily I say unto you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. Notice the Lord does speak of degrees of judgment that will come upon people.

Some people are concerned that all people receive the same punishment. Not so. Jesus said, if a person knows the will of God and does not according to it and is doing evil, he will be beaten with many stripes.

Yet a person who had done things that really deserve or are worthy of many stripes because he did not know the will of the father will be beaten with few stripes. For unto whom much is given, much is required to whom little is given. Little is required.

Now he is saying that it's going to be more tolerable for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in that day of judgment. Earlier he had said that the men of Sodom will arise with this generation and will condemn it. Are the men of Nineveh rather, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah.

Behold, the greater than Jonah is here. So there will be degrees of judgment, punishment meted out by God. And we don't know the final disposition that God will be making of the sinful people.

There is not enough given to us in Scripture to form hard, fast kind of judgments ourselves. That's in God's hand. I don't know what God will do with that person who has never had the opportunity of knowing Jesus Christ or even hearing about Jesus Christ.

I don't know what God will do to them. The Bible isn't specific in that area. I know it'll be much easier on him than it'll be on you if you have heard the gospel and rejected.

So rather than being so worried about him, you better start worrying about yourself. You see, you're responsible for what you know. And he who knows the will of the Father and yet does not accordingly.

That's the fellow that's in big trouble. And so just what judgment and by what measure God is going to meet out. That's something that he has reserved to himself, and I'm glad for that.

There's one occupation I would never want, and that is that of a judge. I just could not face that awesome responsibility of determining the sentences that should be meted out to men. To determine whether or not a fellow is innocent or guilty or the degree of guilt.

That's just something I really would never want to have to do, and I thank God I don't have to. So there will be degrees more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city that rejected the disciples as they went out to witness for him. And so they went out and they preached that men should repent.

The same message that John the Baptist preached. Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. Change.

Turn. And they cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. Now, in the epistle of James, he said, Is there any sick among you? Let them call for the elders of the church and let them anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord shall raise them up. Now, there are some Bible expositors who say that this word anoint is literally to massage. I don't know.

The Bible scholars say a lot of things I really don't know about. If it were to massage, then it would seem to indicate that there was some kind of a healing process through the massaging with oil that I can't believe. I believe that the anointing with oil was purely a symbolic act.

As last week we were sharing with you the importance of having a point of contact for releasing faith. And how the woman coming through the crowd said, If I can just but grasp onto his garment, I know that I will be healed. And when she grasped his garment, immediately she felt in her body that she was healed.

And Jesus stopped and said, Who touched me? There was a point of contact where she released her faith and was healed. Faith was no longer just a passive thing to her. It became active.

It was released. It wasn't. I know the Lord can.

Oh, I'm sure he is able, but I know he is now. And it's that now activating of faith. I believe that the anointing of oil has this very same value.

It is a symbolic act. The oil is scripturally symbolic of the Holy Spirit. And so we as a church do practice anointing with oil, not massaging, just anointing with oil in the name of the Lord.

And the oil being the symbol of the Holy Spirit. So on Saturday night, the elders gather. And if there are any sick within the church and you would like to have the prayer by the elders of the church, you can come on Saturday evening to the library room and there they minister to those that are sick, anointing with oil, praying for them.

And the Lord is faithful and God has touched. And there have been many marvelous healings and miracles wrought through prayer there in the Saturday night prayer service. It's not something that we make a big deal over.

I don't think God's word makes that big a deal over it. We don't try to glorify any individual through this prayer. We feel that the benefit of having the elders pray for you is that no person is singled out for glory.

Only the Lord is singled out for glory. So there isn't the developing of some personality cult where, you know, brother so-and-so laid his hands on me. But we would rather you to know that the Lord wants to lay his hand upon you.

And he is so good. He uses such as us as his instruments that through us he might do his work. And so they the disciples, as they went out, were anointing with oil.

This is the first reference to it and the only reference within the gospel. And the only other reference I know is in James, where he just says, if there's any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church. Now, well, we're not talking about James, so I won't go into that.

We'll get to James, maybe of the Lord Terry's. Many that were sick were thus healed. Now, King Herod heard of Jesus, for his name was spread abroad.

And he said that John the Baptist was risen from the dead and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. But others said that it was Elijah and others said that it was a prophet or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, it's John, whom I beheaded.

He is risen from the dead. Herod no doubt had a guilty conscience concerning John. This family of Herod had to be one of the most messed up families in history.

It is so messed up that I would try and explain to you how messed up it is, but I'd probably get messed up trying to explain it. But this is Herod Antipas. He was the son of Herod the Great.

Herod the Great was the one who was the Herod at the time of the birth of Jesus. He was the one to whom the wise men came and inquired of where the Messiah was to be born. He was the one who said, go search diligently for the young child.

When you've found him, come and let me know that I may come and worship him. He was the one that ordered all of the babies in the area of Bethlehem to be killed who were two years old and under. He was paranoid.

He was always fearful that someone was going to try and kill him and take the throne. Part of his paranoia was probably the result of the fact that he was such a little runt. He was about four feet nine inches tall.

And being a little man, he had great ambitions. And whenever he would build something, he would build it out of huge stones. The Western Wall of Jerusalem today is a testimony to the building prowess of this fellow Herod.

These huge stones that make up the wall that was the retaining wall for the Temple Mount. The Herodian down near the Dead Sea, another tremendous building monument. The Herodian is out near Bethlehem and then the Masada down near the Dead Sea.

Tremendous building monuments that were done by Herod, known as Herod the Great. But because he was so paranoid, he married his first wife Doris, who had a son. And he killed them both.

That is Doris and the son. Then he married another woman named Miriam. And she had two sons.

Now, one of these two sons had a daughter named Salome. Beg your pardon, had a daughter named Herodias. I told you I'd get it messed up.

He had a daughter named Herodias. Then Herod got paranoid about Miriam and the two sons. He thought they were plotting against him, and so he put her to death and the two sons.

And then he missed her after she was dead, and he began to mourn for her. And so he built a tower and all there in Jerusalem as a monument to Miriam because he missed her so much. At this point, a saying developed, it's safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son.

Because at this point, he had wiped out both wives and all of their children. He sort of cooled down from this point onwards, though. He married another guy by the name of Miriam, had a son by the name of Herod Philip, who moved to Rome and was just a wealthy merchantman.

But Herod Philip married his niece, Herodias, who was the daughter of the assassinated brother, who was a half-brother to Herod Philip. So she was his wife and his niece all at the same time. Now, Herod married another gal, and she had a couple of sons, of which one was Herod Antipas.

This is the Herod in our story. Herod Antipas was the ruler over a portion of the kingdom that his father Herod the Great had ruled over, over the area up in the Galilee region. Now, Herod Antipas went to Rome and visited his brother, half-brother Herod Philip.

Now, Herod Philip and Herodias, his niece, had a daughter that they named Salome. And Herod Antipas, when he was in Rome visiting his brother, fell in love with Herodias, his brother's wife, who was also his niece, and talked her into leaving his brother, her husband, and marry him and return and reign with him in Galilee. Now, John the Baptist was a straight shooter, and John the Baptist spoke out against this unlawful action by Herod Antipas.

And so we read, For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife, for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not

lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Now, Herod, he liked to listen to John.

Though he didn't obey, he liked to listen to this guy. He was fascinated by John. But Herodias had it in for him.

She was a very ambitious woman, scheming. Finally, she talked Herod Antipas to go to Rome, and they both of them went to Rome together, to ask the emperor to give him the title of king. The emperor of Rome, rather than giving him the title of king, banished him to Gaul.

And that's the end of Herod Antipas and the history of him. But at this point, Herodias was really upset because John had spoken out against their marriage, saying it isn't lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Therefore, Herodias had a quarrel against him and would have killed him.

So angry, she would have killed him in the quarrel. John was just, you know, laying it on straight to her. And they were quarreling.

She became angry. And had she been able to, she would have killed him. She was so angry with him, but she could not.

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy, and he listened to him. And when he had heard him, he did many things and he heard him gladly. He liked listening.

It was sort of a strange kind of a thing where, you know, a person likes to hear you, but yet they don't follow it. Now, when a convenient day was come that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords and high captains and those chief men of Galilee. And when the daughters of this said Herodias came in and danced and pleased Herod and then that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it to thee.

Now, the solo dances by women in those days were very sensual and usually done only by prostitutes. And of course, the whole purpose was the inflaming of the passions. And that Herodias would allow her daughter to perform such a dance before these men, show of what low moral character she was.

She was a woman without morals, allowing her daughter to go before these men with this sensual dance. Herod being aroused by the dance, please, he said unto her, ask me whatever you want and I will give it to you. I swear that whatever you ask of me, I will give to you even to the half of my kingdom.

Must have been quite a dance. And she went forth to her mother and said, what shall I ask? And she said, the head of John the Baptist. And so she came in immediately with haste to the king and she asked, saying, I will that you give me immediately in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

And the king was exceeding sorry. Yet, for his oath sake and for the sakes of those that sat with him, he would not reject her. He had put himself in a corner.

And because of the oath and the fact that it was done in front of these fellows, he couldn't back down. Pride wouldn't let him. And so he did that unlawful murderous thing.

Adding sin to sin, compounding the situation. He had John the Baptist beheaded and the head brought to her and he gave it to the damsel and she took it to her mother. And when the disciples heard of it, they came and took up the corpse and buried it.

Now, Herod, no doubt, had a guilty conscience over this that lasted. So later on, when he heard the fame of Jesus, heard the miracles that Jesus heard of him, there's a fellow there doing all kinds of miracles. He said, it's John the Baptist.

He's come back from the dead. It was it was a haunting guilt of his deed. He couldn't get John out of his mind.

Perhaps he was even comforted by the thought that it must be John the Baptist. Come back from the dead because he knew that what he had done was wrong. Now the apostles and that's that's the end of that particular segment of the story.

Now we come back. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Jesus had sent his apostles out. To minister.

And now they come back from this preaching mission. And they gathered themselves together unto Jesus and they told him all of the things, both what they had done and what they had taught. They were sharing with them the marvelous meetings, the conversions, the healings, the power, the glory of their experience of going out in his name and preaching his gospel.

And having received their reports, he said, come ye yourselves apart into a deserted area and let's rest a while. For there were so many people who were coming and going that they did not have any leisure time, not even enough time to sit down and eat. Now they had enough time to eat, that is, grab something as you're going by the table.

But in those days, eating was a big ceremony. You know, you sat down, you really made a big deal out of eating. And they didn't have any time for that.

They were being too pressured by the crowd. So Jesus, seeing the pressure, the weariness, invited them to go over to the other side of the lake where it was more of a deserted area that they might just rest. Probably sounded great to the disciples and they departed into this deserted area by ship privately.

But the people saw them departing and many knew him, they knew who it was. And so they ran afoot, further out of all the cities and they outwent them. Now, Capernaum is at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee.

It's only about six miles wide. You can see all the way across the sea. And so it was easy for them to watch the direction the little boat was going.

And so they just ran around the upper end of the island. And as they passed through Bethsaida, Chorazin, and those cities, people no doubt questioned them where they were going. You know, you see someone running, you think, well, what's going on? You see a group of people running, you say, hey, what's happening? Oh, Jesus is, you know, going to be landing over here on the other side.

All right, you know, and so a big group of people joined them out of each of the cities. Until finally, when Jesus landed with his disciples, there were at least 5,000 men beside the women and children that were waiting for the little boat to dock. At this point, I can imagine that the disciples were rather irritated with the inconsiderate nature of the people.

You know, don't you realize that we're needing rest? We want rest. We need to get away. We want to relax.

And you're tired, easy to get irritated. And I'm sure that the disciples were irritated with this crowd. But Jesus was moved with compassion toward them.

Rather than being irritated, it touched him, touched his heart. Oh, these blessed people, so hungry for God, a real experience with God. And he was moved with compassion because he looked at them in an entirely different light.

Whereas the disciples were perhaps looking at them as a nuisance. Jesus saw them as poor little sheep without a shepherd. They don't know where they're going.

They're lost. They have no defense. And he saw them as sheep without a shepherd.

And because he had the heart of a shepherd, it touched him, it moved him. And so he began to teach the people. Now, when the day was far spent, getting evening, his disciples came unto him with a problem.

They said, look, this is a deserted area. It's getting late, Lord. You better send these people away that they may go into the country round about here and into the villages and buy themselves some bread, for they don't have anything to eat.

And Jesus said, well, give them something to eat. And they said, what do you mean? Do you want us to go into town and try and buy \$5,000 worth of bread so we can feed these people? Jesus said, well, how much bread do you have? Go out and check. So they went out and checked and they came back and they said, well, there's a little kid here that has five loaves and two fish.

That's all we've got. Jesus said, well, have them all sit down in company. So they sat them down in groups of 50 and 100.

And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and he blessed and broke the loaves and he gave them to his disciples to set before them. And the two fish, he also divided among them all. And they did all eat and were filled.

That particular Greek word translated filled would be better translated, glutted. Literally translated, glutted. They all ate and were glutted.

I mean, they ate until they couldn't eat anymore. And they took up 12 baskets full of the fragments and of the fish. And they that did eat of the loaves were about 5,000 men.

So the first of the two recorded incidences where Jesus miraculously fed the multitude with just a few loaves of bread. Here, 5,000 men beside women and children, probably 10 to 15,000 people being fed by five little sandwich loaves and two little fish. But then collecting, that's the interesting thing, collecting 12 baskets full of the fragments after everyone was glutted.

And immediately he constrained his disciples to get into the ship and go to the other side before unto Bethsaida while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. A busy day.

You try to escape for rest. You arrive on the shore and there's 10,000 people waiting for you. And so you give of yourself until it's late in the evening.

And then you perform the miracle. Now you must really be ready for that rest. He ordered his disciples to get in the ship and to head back over to the other side passing by Bethsaida.

Get on over. While he himself sent away the multitude of people, but then you need rest. And how did he find his rest? He departed into a mountain to pray.

He found strength always through prayer. It was a place of rest and a place of strengthening. Oh, that we would learn the strength of prayer.

Again, one of the greatest encouragements to pray or the greatest display of our need for prayer is the fact that Jesus prayed. Now if he felt prayer was such an essential part of his own life, being who he was, how much more essential is prayer to us? If he felt that he could not get along without it, how in the world do you think you can get by without it? Prayer surely is one of the most neglected spiritual functions in the body of Christ. It's something that you need to seriously consider.

I am certain that the world would be much better off today if there were more people praying. Our lives would be much better off if we prayed more. God help us.

There is tremendous power that has been made available to each of us, but we must take advantage of it through prayer. Now when the evening was come, it was now night. The ship was in the midst of the sea, and he was alone on the land.

He saw them toiling and rowing. I told you the Sea of Galilee is not very wide at that point. It is possible that it was a full moon night.

If so, on a full moon, you can see again across the sea and everything that's on the sea. That full moon is so bright over there, you can't believe it. And you could see them as the moon, of course, was reflecting across the water.

A wind had come up, and it was against them, but they were rowing. Now, I like this, because they were in this position because Jesus had commanded them to get in the ship and go. Obeying the command of Christ, they were actually being put in a position of strain.

You who think that by following the will of the Lord, everything is going to be just so rosy, peaches and cream, you got another thing coming. Jesus ordered them to go across the sea against the wind, against the storm. He put them in this position of toil and strain, and they were already weary and tired.

But I love their dogged obedience. Now, it would have been a lot easier for them to just turn the boat around and row with the thing on back, you know. Why try and fight this, you know? Because you're rowing, and you're not going anywhere, you know.

Here's the candlelight of Bethsaida off to the right side, and, you know, I guess if you're rowing backwards, it'd be off to your left side. But, you know, you're rowing, and the lights are still the same place after an hour. Oh, no, you know.

But Jesus told us to go, you know. And they were in this condition because they were obeying the command of the Lord. I love it.

And the Lord sat there watching them. He saw them toiling in rowing. The wind was contrary.

Now, it was about the fourth watch of the night. I mean, He let them really go at it for a while because the fourth watch of the night begins at 3 o'clock in the morning. The fourth watch is from 3 o'clock in the morning to 6 o'clock in the morning.

So, I mean, these guys had really been going at it. And Jesus just sitting there watching them. Lord! It's not fair.

And about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking on the sea and acted like He was just going to walk right past them. Someone asked me if I thought that Jesus ever laughed. I think He has a tremendous sense of humor.

You know, they're toiling, they're rowing and all. And He comes walking across the sea just like He doesn't see them, like He's walking right past them, you know. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought it's got to be a ghost.

And they started crying out in fear. For they all saw Him and they were troubled. And immediately He talked to them and He said unto them, Be of good cheer.

It is I. Don't be afraid. And He went up unto them into the ship. And the wind ceased.

And they were very amazed in themselves beyond measure. Then they wondered. For they really didn't consider the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with just the five loaves and two fish.

For their hearts were hard. And it was just, you know, they saw it, but they didn't. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret and drew near to shore.

So they didn't go to Capernaum, but actually a little south from Capernaum to the area of Gennesaret, which is near the little area of Magdala from which Mary Magdalene came. Now you that have been to Israel have the advantage of being able to picture all of this in your mind. They came to the area of Gennesaret and they drew to shore.

And as soon as they got out of the boat, the people recognized Him and they ran through that whole region all around there. And they began to carry beds, in beds, those that were sick, where they heard that He was. And wherever He entered into the villages or cities or the country, they laid the sick in the streets and they begged Him that He might touch, that they might touch, if it were but the border of His garment.

And as many as touched Him were made whole. So, that woman who had first touched the Lord sort of opened up an area where many people then came to the place of releasing their faith by touching Him. And as many as touched were made whole.

Then there came together unto Him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. They came on up from Jerusalem to the area of Galilee. And when they saw some of His disciples eating bread with defiled, that is to say with unwashed hands, they found fault.

For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they washed their hands often, do not eat, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they came from the market, unless they would wash, they would not eat. And many other things there be which they which have received to hold as the washing of cups and pots and brass vessels and tables and all.

I mean all of the rules concerning ceremonial washing for cleanliness. Now, this is not hygienic. This is ceremonial.

And according to the ceremonial washing, and of course sometime after this, the mission was compiled in which all of these rules and regulations were put concerning the washing. And it's interesting all of the rules that they had concerning the washing of hands, this particular type of washing. It wasn't that you just go over and wash your hands off.

You had to wash your hands in a particular way in order to be ceremonially clean. Because you see, if your hands were ceremonially dirty by touching something that someone else had touched who wasn't clean. Say, you know, I was a Gentile and I had touched a coin and you touched that coin.

I was a Gentile and clean. Therefore, if you touch the coin that I touched, you would be unclean too because I'm an unclean Gentile. So you go to the marketplace and you get your change and who knows who's been touching those coins.

And so when you get home, you want to eat. You can't just go wash your hands hygienically and eat. You got to wash them ceremonially.

And to do that, you had to first of all get someone to help you out because you had to have what they called a half a log of oil which is about two egg shells full in the first washing. And what you do is with your fingers extended upward, you would take your fist and rub it into one hand as the water was poured over. Rub your fingers together and then your hand, your fist within the hand.

And then the other side. And you would hold your hands out this way because anything that touches you would be unclean. So the water that you're washing with becomes unclean because it's touched you and your hands were unclean.

You see, ceremonially. So you hold them out like this so that the water drips off the wrist because you don't want that water to drip on you because any part that hit you that would be unclean too and then you have to go through another bath. So you hold it out like this and let the water drip on down.

Then, because the water that was used is now unclean and that which is dripping off is unclean, then you would have to hold your hands downward and out from you and they would pour another half log of oil, I mean of water over your hands as you're holding them down and let it run off the fingers. And this is the way that if you didn't wash that way and you would eat without going through this and they would do it several times during a meal. You know, go through this whole ceremonial bit of washing their hands.

Now, they also had these pots that you don't know what may have touched the pot. Some little fly may have landed on the pot that had landed on a Gentile shoulder or something. And so, they would also go through the process of washing the pot on the outside.

However, if when the pot was open, a fly would happen to land on the inside, that was it. You had to break the thing in pieces and not leave a piece large enough to take oil to anoint your little toe. In other words, it had to really be shattered because it was unclean.

And a lot of rules like this. If it was brass or metal, then there was a ceremonial washing for that and you could use that over. But pots or dishes, if they were just flat, then they would be alright.

But if there were any rim on the dish and it became unclean, then you had to break it completely. You couldn't use it again. And all of these rules were codified in the Mishnah of these washings, the traditions of the elders.

The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, Why do not Your disciples, according to the tradition of the elders, they're eating bread without washing their hands? And He answered and said unto them, Well, has Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites? As it is written, This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. How be it? In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. It is interesting how easily the traditions of man can become the dogmas and the doctrines of the church.

Things that are just traditions. I think that traditions are probably the hardest thing a person has to deal with as far as being free. We are bound by traditions.

Traditions have a greater hold on a person than almost anything else. These traditions are deeply ingrained in us. But if you really go back to study the background of the traditions, you'll find that many times they have no biblical base at all, but often times, traditions are based in paganism.

And yet, because they've been practiced so long in church, they become the dogma of the church and finally the doctrines of the church. Take Halloween, the tradition of trick and treat. The children dressing up as witches and goblins and going around.

Now, which one of you loving parents wants to deny your sweet little child the privilege of, you know, dressing up like a witch or a ghost or a goblin? That they might take their sack around to the neighbors and munch sweets off of them. Extort them, actually, because the idea is, if you don't, you know, come through, we're going to soap your windows. It's extortion.

And yet, it's tradition. Of course, when I was a kid, there were no treats. It was just tricks.

Or there was treats I didn't hear about it. But really, as you look at the whole practice, it's quite wrong. In fact, it's extremely dangerous because there are so many stupid people in this world that there are those who get some kind of a kick out of lacing the goodies with razor blades or poison or things of that nature.

And every Halloween, children inadvertently are picking up harmful things and many of them injured as the result of this. And yet, parents, you know, aid and abet them in their extortion plots as they take them through the neighborhoods, you know, treat or else. But it's tradition.

We can see so many flaws and wrong aspects to it and yet, you know, which one of you have enough guts to say to your kid, no, you're not going to go out this year. It's interesting just how deeply ingrained traditions become. Now, within the church, so many traditions have developed.

And unfortunately, in the church, the same things are being done which Jesus accused the Pharisees of doing and that is teaching for doctrines the traditions of man. There are many doctrines of the church that have not a scriptural base but have only a traditional base. The doctrine of infant baptism for salvation, you will not find one scriptural base for that doctrine.

It's the traditions of men and yet, it is held too tightly by many, many churches as solid church doctrine. But it's doctrine based upon tradition, not the foundation of the word. And that's just one of many.

For he said, you lay aside the commandment of God and you hold the tradition of men like the washing of your pots and cups and the many other things like you do. And he said unto them, you actually are rejecting the commandment of God that you may keep your own traditions. You're putting your traditions above the commandments of God.

For Moses said, honor thy father and mother and whoso will curse his father and mother, let him die the death. But you say, if a man shall say to his father and mother, it's Corban. That is to say, a gift.

By whatsoever thou mayest be profited by me, he shall be free. And you allow him no more to give to his father and mother. Or he can do what he wants.

Now, if you would curse your father and mother under the Jewish law, you'd be stoned. You'd honor your father and mother. And whosoever should curse his father and mother should be put to death.

But they developed this tradition. You say, now, dad, this is Corban. I'm going to give you a gift.

You are a dirty, rotten louse, and I hate you and have always hated. No, this is for your good, dad. This is a gift for you.

As long as you preface it, this is a gift. This is Corban. That you might be benefited by this.

Then you could go ahead and say whatever you wanted. That was their tradition by which they circumvented the law of God. You were actually to provide for your parents.

But you say, well, it's Corban. I've given that to God. You can't have that, you know.

And you could actually wipe out any obligation to add to a person by saying, anything I owe you is Corban. That is, it's dedicated to God. And therefore, you can't have it.

And by these traditions, they were actually negating the law of God. So, you make the word of God of no effect through your tradition, which you have delivered, and many things like this you do, you hypocrites, he said. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said, hearken unto me.

All right, crowd, gather. Harken unto me. And now he says probably one of the most radical things he has said up to this point.

Now, Jesus said an awful lot of radical things in his life. But up to this point, this was probably the most radical thing that he said. And you have to understand the background in which it was said.

That is, of the people. Under the Mosaic law, there were certain meats that they were forbidden to eat. One of those being swine or pig.

Under the law, it was forbidden. It was considered unclean. It was forbidden.

Now, during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, that Syrian king who had conquered Israel and sought to just profane and blaspheme these people, he ordered that they eat, all of them, eat pork. It was a commandment of Antiochus Epiphanes. And if they would not eat pork, they would be put to death.

And hundreds of Jews died rather than to eat pork. Thousands of them during the time of the Maccabees. Thousands of them died rather than to violate the law and eat pork.

Now, Jesus is going to say something extremely radical with this kind of a background. Hearken to me. He's talking to the crowd now.

He's been talking to the Pharisees, telling them about how they disannulled the law of God by their traditions. And now he's calling the crowd to hearken to him. And this radical statement.

There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him, but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile the man. If any man has a ear to hear, let him hear. It's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him.

Pork, whatever. Now, this was a radical departure from their traditions. In fact, when he came into the house, away from the people, his disciples said, Lord, explain that one to us.

And he said unto them, Are you without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatsoever thing from without enters into a man? It can't defile him because it enters not into his heart, but only into his belly and goes out into the drought and purge which purges all means. Now there's the meats are all purged out of your body. They don't defile you in a spiritual sense.

And of course, we're talking about ceremonial washing. The meat that you eat doesn't defile you. Now it can make you sick or it can, you know, do things, but spiritually it doesn't defile you.

There's no spiritual defilement in it because it passes through your body. And he said that which comes out of the man, that is what defiles the man for from within, out of the heart of men, proceeds the evil thoughts, the adulteries, the fornications, the murders, the thefts, the covetousness, the wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, the evil eye, the blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All of these evil things come from within that defile the man.

So it's not what goes in, but what comes out and that reveals what is in the man's heart. And there's where the true spiritual defilement or purity exists in the heart. Blessed are the pure in heart.

They shall see God. That's where real spiritual defilement is, not in what you are eating, but what you are, the inward part of your life, what's in your heart, not what's in your belly that counts. Now from there he arose.

Now he's at the area around Gennesaret there at the Sea of Galilee, and he went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon, of course, are over on the coast. You've been reading about them quite a bit of late.

Tyre is about 35 miles from Capernaum in a northeasterly direction, and of course, about 20 miles further up the road is Sidon. And so Jesus left the area of the Galilee now and is going over actually into Gentile territory. And he entered into a house.

He wanted to do it secretly, but he could not be hid. For there was a certain woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, and she heard of him, and she came and fell at his feet. And the woman was a Greek, a Seraphim by nation, and she begged him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled, for it is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. Now, at this point, many people are offended with Jesus. Here is a woman, a mother, who is in real trouble.

She's got a daughter that's got big problems. Her daughter is possessed by an unclean spirit. And this mother, out of desperation, is coming to Jesus for help.

But because she is a Greek, a Seraphim by nation, Jesus makes reference to her as a dog. Now, there were these wild scavenger dogs that were hated by everybody. They would run in packs.

They would attack sheep. They would attack children. And they were ferocious, vicious, hated animals.

And it was very common for the Jews to call the Gentile, Gentile dogs. And the word is equivalent to our English word, bitch, where it is a derogatory term. And so they would use it, the word dog, like a person would use the other word today in a very derisive, derogatory way.

And to think that Jesus would make reference to this woman like that is very unsettling. If He did, but He didn't. There is another Greek word for dog, which is the word that Jesus used.

It is that little household pet that's always under the table. That little pet of the family. And most of the Jewish homes had their little pet dogs, which were domesticated and lovable little animals under the table.

And when Jesus said it isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs, He used this Greek word that could be translated, it isn't right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the little puppies, these cute little dogs under the table. And she answered and said unto Him, that's true, Lord. Yet those little puppies under the table eat the children's crumbs.

Now, in those days, they did not have knives and forks and spoons. They did not have eating utensils. They didn't even use chopsticks.

They used the utensils that God first created for man to eat with. They used their hands. And so the eating, it was an interesting process.

Always bread. And usually you would break your bread, pull it off, and then dip it in the soup or in the sauces or in whatever. And you'd use your bread oftentimes as sort of a spoon.

And when we were over there, we usually go out for one oriental, what they call oriental meal, but it's more of an Arabic type of a meal where they serve you the pita bread and all of these sauces. And, you know, you break the thing and you do your dipping and all, and you have all these exotic kind of salsas and everything else to eat with your pita bread, your tahini, and your hummus, and all of those delicious things. But they use their hands.

They use their fingers. Now, of course, by the time you're through eating, you've got, you know, the grease and everything else all over your hands. So the final piece of bread, you would take it and use it to wipe off as a napkin.

You'd use it to wipe off your hands. And then you'd toss it under the table to the little dog down there waiting, standing up and woof, woof, woof, you know. And stand up, you know, and you'd drop him this final piece of bread that had all these delicious juices on it.

And the dogs would eat these crumbs or these pieces of bread that would be used to wipe off the hands from the master's table. So to understand it from its cultural background, it's not nearly as severe as it would just appear on the surface to us. Here's this woman.

She's a Greek, and she's outside of the covenant. Jesus said, I'm not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But here's this woman from outside of the covenant race, and she's coming to Jesus, and she's saying, Lord, help me.

My daughter is at home, and she's vexed with an unclean spirit. Jesus said, it's not right to take the children's bread and to cast it to the little puppies. That is the bread that they're supposed to be eating.

That's true, Lord. But those little puppies, they get the crumbs at the end. Those that fall from the master's table, Jesus said, For this saying, and another gospel said, Oh, woman, create his life.

For this saying, go thy way. The devil has gone out of your daughter. And when she came home, she found the devil was gone out, and her daughter was lying there on the bed.

And again, as he departed from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, he came under the Sea of Galilee through the midst of the coast of Decapolis. So actually, he made a roundabout journey going north before coming south. And they brought unto him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech.

And they besought that he would put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and he put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and saith unto him, Epaphtha, that is, be opened.

And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. And he charged them that they should tell no man, but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it. And they were beyond measure and astonished, saying, He has done all of these things well.

And he makes both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. Now, here we find again an interesting method that Jesus is using. Spitting.

Putting his fingers in the guy's ears, because he's deaf. And then spitting and putting it on his tongue. The interesting thing about Jesus is that He did not follow a pattern.

We seem to be so organized, we want everything to work by patterns. We're always looking for the secret formula. We're always trying to find that method.

And we're seeking to develop within the church methodologies. This is the method by which the work of God is wrought. No.

There is no method by which the work of God is wrought. God works in many different ways and refuses to be confined to any pattern because God doesn't want us to develop methodology. So the Lord has chosen to work as He pleases to work.

And often times in different ways. Now, we are told in Corinthians, now there are diversities of gifts. That is of the Holy Spirit.

And there are also diversities of operations. So that God may give to ten people a gift of the Word of Knowledge, but it works in a different way in all ten because there are diversities of operations even of the diversities of gifts. God refuses to be patterned or pigeonholed.

God always allows Himself that freedom of working in a unique way however He sees fit. And so, it is wrong for us to try to find some method, some secret formula whereby we might see the power of God working in a particular way. There was a time in my own ministry when I was seeking the Lord, as He said, covet earnestly the best gifts, and I was seeking the Lord for the gifts of healing.

We were living in Tucson, and I was diligently seeking the Lord. I wanted all that God had for me. There were so many sick people in Tucson.

It's one of those places where people from the east who have asthma or arthritis or whatever, they go to Tucson because of the climate and the low humidity and so forth. A lot of sick people. And we had to minister to a lot of sick people.

And so, I was just thinking, Lord, it would be so great if I just had the gift of healing. And so, oftentimes, in our services, we would pray for the sick. And one evening, we had a lady who was... We had set up a tent.

We were having a tent meeting out in the area of 22nd and Craycroft near Davis Mothom. And this one lady came to the tent, and she was blind in her left eye. And so, her friends brought her that she might be prayed for to be healed.

And so, I laid hands on her to pray that God would heal the blindness in her left eye. And as I prayed, when I said, in the name of Jesus, I felt something, a sensation. That's the best I can describe.

Just a sensation in my left hand. And when I took my hand off and the lady looked to my surprise, she said, I can see! I can see! Oh, praise the Lord, I can see! And, you know, it was exciting. She went around and told the whole neighborhood she could see.

And, of course, they all knew she was blind and she proved it, you know, she could cover her right eye and read things with her left eye. And her eye was healed. I can't explain it.

I was surprised, and pleasantly so, but nonetheless surprised. She started bringing a lot of people with different ailments to be prayed for. And I was trying to remember, just how did I do it, you know? And what did I say, you know? I was looking for the magic formula.

And I'd put my hand on, I'd say, In the name of Jesus. Wouldn't feel anything. In the name of Jesus, you know.

Gotta be, you know, somewhere in there. But it's interesting how we're always trying to find that formula. God doesn't work by formulas.

He works by His sovereign grace. You can't pattern God. And so Jesus didn't follow the same methods.

He used different methods. Now, one further thing. He would tell people, Now, don't tell anybody.

But they'd go out and blow it anyhow. Why was Jesus saying, Don't tell anyone? Jesus was seeking to forestall any premature attempt by the people excited over the miracles, seeking to acclaim Him and set Him up as the Messiah. There was a special day God had before ordained that the Messiah should be revealed to the people.

When Jesus was in Cana of Galilee at the beginning of His ministry and they were at this wedding feast and they had run out of wine. His mother came to Him and said, Son, they've run out of wine. And He said,

What's that to me? It's not my problem.

He said, My hour has not yet come. Don't rush things, Mom. My hour has not yet come.

Jesus was constantly looking forward to that hour in which He was to be presented as the Messiah. And over and over again we hear Him saying, My hour is not yet come. So He would say, Now look, keep it quiet.

Don't tell anybody. Because there was an attempt prematurely to acclaim Him as the Messiah after the feeding of the multitude. They said, Wow, who else can feed them like that? The Messiah of the Kingdom Ages is here looking to take a few loaves of bread and feed everybody and they were going to by force push Him into the position of the Messiah.

And He passed through their midst. He disappeared from them. God had promised a day.

In the Psalms He declared, This is the day that the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. The day that the Messiah would be revealed.

And so Jesus was seeking to stop any movement by the people to prematurely go ahead of God's plan to establish or to seek to establish Him as the Messiah. So that is why He would say, Go thy way, don't tell anybody. But when God has done something like that, how can you be quiet about it? And so the more He seemed to try and stop them, the more they published it.

And people were amazed because He was able to open up the ears of the deaf and to loosen the tongues of the dumb. Marvelous work of our Lord. We'll continue in chapter 8 next week as we get the feeding of the 4,000 and a similar miracle to that of the feeding of the five.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee has a little commentary entitled Marching Through Mark. I think we better write one Crawling Through Mark. But it's all the Word of God.

And it's all good for us. May the Lord be with you and bless you through the week. May the Word of Christ dwell in your heart richly through faith.

And may God help you to take the time to pray. More time in prayer this week. Make it a covenant in your heart before the Lord.

Just to spend more valuable time with Him. Even if it means turning off the TV, as horrible as that may sound. And may God just draw you close to Himself.

Fill you with His love, with His Spirit. Strengthen you by His Spirit in your inner man and out of your heart. May there proceed praises, blessings unto the Lord our God.

Oh, may God richly bless you this week as you walk with Him in close communion. In Jesus' name.

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