**THESE PEOPLE HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS**

Mark 7:1-13

Key verse 7:6b

 These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

**Introduction**



 Some believers look like religious people before the eyes of men rather than become holy before the eyes of God by obeying the word of God. The Pharisees in today’s passage were like that. But the life of faith is not about looking holy before men; it is a matter of the heart before the eyes of God. And the word of God can help us to purify our hearts when we repent our sins based on the word of God. Let us think about how we can keep our hearts pure before God by living by the word of God. Also, Jesus teaches us to uphold God’s words as opposed to human traditions. By upholding the word of God, Jesus put His church, that is God’s ministry on the solid foundation of the words of God. May the Lord help us learn how to worship God truly and bear fruit for God’s glory. Amen.

1. Read verses 1-4. Who had come from Jerusalem and for what purpose might they have gathered around Jesus? (1) What did they see? (2) In light of their religious practices, why might they have been offended by Jesus’ disciples? (3-4)

1-1, Read verses 1-4.

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus 2 and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24468a)])

1-2, Who had come from Jerusalem and for what purpose might they have gathered around Jesus? (1)

***The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus***

* A team of Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus who was doing the work of God in Galilee. It wasn’t because they were interested in the work of God he was doing or because they wanted to learn from Jesus.
* They were dispatched by the religious authorities in Jerusalem to investigate Jesus to find a basis for a charge against him.
* They were there to gather information about Jesus to use against him. The Jewish leaders were alarmed by the rising popularity of Jesus.
* In fact, they had already decided to eliminate Jesus, considering him as a potential threat to their authority.
* Their were wrong, because they did not evaluate Jesus against the measure of God’s Word. They evaluated Him against the measure of their religious traditions.

1-3, What did they see? (2)

***2 and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.***

* They followed Jesus and watched him for everything he did. They did not find any basis in Jesus to accuse him with.
* But they found something in the behavior of his disciples. They noticed that his disciples did not wash their hands before they ate.
* The disciples were always hungry and they must have forgotten to wash their hands before eating. The religious leaders were not worried about their health.
* The religious leaders were shocked to find that Jesus’ disciples neglected the ceremonial washing of their hands.

1-4, In light of their religious practices, why might they have been offended by Jesus’ disciples? (3-4)

 ***(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)***

* According to Mark’s comment, The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.
* When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. They observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.
* The traditions of the Jewish elders were different from the Law of Moses in the Bible. These traditions began to protect their spiritual condition.
* But over time, more and more items were added to the traditions and by Jesus’ time, they had 613 traditions to observe.
* The Mishna supplements the written, or scriptural, laws found in the Pentateuch or Torah. It presents various interpretations of selective legal traditions that had been preserved orally since the time of Ezra.
* The **Talmud** has two components; the **Mishnah** (Hebrew: משנה‎, c. 200), a written compendium of Rabbinic Judaism's Oral Torah; and the Gemara (Hebrew: גמרא‎, c. 500), an elucidation of the **Mishnah**.
* If anyone wanted to do something, they had to consult with the religious authorities to check if his action would somehow violate one of the traditions.
* In the process of trying to observe them, the spirit of the original traditions was gone and they had become invisible burden to them. The people lived under the heavy burden of the legalism because of the traditions.
1. Read verses 5-8. What did the Pharisees and teachers of the law ask Jesus? (5) What was Jesus’ reply? (6-8) What can we learn from Jesus? Think about some examples of following the traditions of men instead of God’s words.

2-1, Read verses 5-8.

 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” 6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ 8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

2-2, What did the Pharisees and teachers of the law ask Jesus? (5)

 ***So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”***

* The Pharisees used the traditions of the elders to control their people. The problem was that even the Pharisees could not keep all the traditions.
* They seemed to keep them alight but only outwardly. Their hearts were not there. They observed them as rituals and they thought they were good.
* They became hypocrites. It did not help them to consecrate their hearts before God. But they had many other similar traditions.
* In this way, the traditions lost their original intent. Instead, the traditions became a tool of condemning others for the religious leaders.

2-3, What was Jesus’ reply? (6-8)

***6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’[***[***b***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24471b)***] 8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”***

* Jesus told them that they should honor God with their hearts. God cannot be honored if we praise him only with our lips.
* He cannot be honored if we worship him by going through the motions when our hearts are far from him.
* He cannot be honored if we let go of his commands and follow man-made traditions.
* God wants us to worship him from our hearts. He wants us to love him from our hearts. He does not want from us a lip service.

2-4, What can we learn from Jesus?

* Jesus was building a church not based on customs and traditions and rules and regulations and laws. He was building a church based on faith in Him and His words of promise.
* His church would be built on his death and resurrection and sin forgiveness through his blood, shed on the cross.
* His church would be built on the confession of faith in him and what he had done, that is the only way for people’s souls to be saved from sin.
* *And his church would have one law— “Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.”*
* *His church would have one custom— that of self sacrifice(giving) and self denial. His church would have one rule(goal)— that of serving God’s will.*
* *His church would have one regulations— that of holding on to the truth of God at any cost.*
* So from Jesus’ rebuke, we learn that God wants us to love him with all our hearts. God is a jealous God whose name is love.
* The love relationship becomes complete when we come to love God as much as he loved us.
* While we are still sinners, God demonstrated His own love for us through Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins. That is why we repent of our sins and believes in God’s sincere love. Then we know his love in person.
* Deuteronomy 6:5 says, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”
* Jesus says that “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24).

2-5, Think about some examples of following the traditions of men instead of God’s words.

* When we first accept Jesus as our Savior, we are so happy to be forgiven of our sins and to receive eternal life. We praise him from our hearts.
* But over time, we tend to lose our first love. Our hearts become lukewarm. We often go through the motions rather than deeply seek the Lord and worship him.
* We criticize the Pharisee for their hypocrisy but we often find ourselves doing the same things they did.
* Traditions and cultural heritages are good because their original intentions are honorable. But people forget about it and follow them habitually.
* In our society, many people get excited about Christmas and Thanksgiving without thinking about the true meaning of them.
* To some people, these traditions are no more than commercial opportunities like black Friday. We should not let go of the commands of God for traditions.
* The word of God is life-giving and everlasting. This country was founded on the Bible-believing faith of the Pilgrim Fathers and the Puritans.
* Their life on this new land was extremely difficult in the early years. But they believed in the words of God and obeyed them in their lives.
* “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” - Mt 6:33
* So they built their churches before they put up their own houses. God blessed their faith abundantly and blessed this country.
* Many people follow the trend of the world instead of the word of God.
* *They attend church, but their heart is far from Me.*
* *They read their Bible, but their heart is far from Me.*
* *They pray eloquently, but their heart is far from Me.*
* *They contribute money, but their heart is far from Me.*
* *They do ministry, but their heart is far from Me.*
* *They love to sing, but their heart is far from Me.*
* *They talk to others about Jesus, but their heart is far from Me.*
* Let us pray that people of this nation may get back to the Bible once again so that we may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
1. Read verses 9-13. How did the Pharisees and teachers of the law set aside the commands of God to observe their own traditions? (9-12) What does “you do many things like that” show about them? (13)

3-1, Read verses 9-13.

 And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24473c)] your own traditions! 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24474d)] and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24474e)] 11 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— 12 then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. 13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

3-2, How did the Pharisees and teachers of the law set aside the commands of God to observe their own traditions? (9-12)

 ***And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe[***[***c***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24473c)***] your own traditions! 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’[***[***d***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24474d)***] and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’[***[***e***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24474e)***] 11 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— 12 then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.***

* The Pharisees were proud of keeping all the traditions of the elders. But their hearts were not right before God.
* They cared more about how they appeared to men than to God. The result was that they became quite creative in circumventing the word of God.
* Jesus used an example to point out their problem. For Moses said, “Honor your father and your mother,” and “Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.” This is the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments.
* The Jewish society was a family-centered community. Parents took care of their children until they grew up. Children in turn took care of their parents when they were old. And this was based on God’s holy command.
* But some religious leaders apparently circumvented this command by a man-made tradition called “Corban.” then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother.
* Originally the term “Corban” was used to designate financial assets to be used for the temple. It could not be used for secular purposes.
* But the Jews turned this into a scheme to avoid their responsibility of taking care of their parents.
* It was like donating all your assets to a church on the condition, so that you don’t have to use them for your parents.
* Nullifying the word of God by human tradition is a serious matter, for the word of God is the only absolute truth for us. So neglecting the word of God is detrimental to a person’s spiritual life.
* Jesus once asked the Twelve, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God”.
* Living a life without God’s word is like trying to grow a plant without water. Those who abide in the word of God are like a tree planted by streams of water.
* This is the reason why Jesus spent so much time teaching the word of God wherever and whenever he had opportunity. This is the reason why Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for abandoning God’s word for their traditions.

3-3, What does “you do many things like that” show about them? (13)

 ***Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”***

* Their intention is to nullify the word of God by their tradition. They should have absolutely kept the word of God as the word of God.
* This is the reason why Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for abandoning God’s word for their traditions.
* May the Lord help us not to nullify the word of God, but to live by the word of God daily for God’s glory. Amen.
* Taking a commandment or opinion of men and teaching or promoting it as a doctrine from God is what supports man made tradition too. It gives man’s word the same weight as God’s word.

**Conclusion**

 As we honor God and worship Him with all our hearts, God makes our hearts fruitful, and the holy desires to love Him and serve Him grows in us. He also fills us with His divine love and mercy. He then makes our life prosperous. He changes us into his prince and princess, enabling us to participate in his glory, becoming like Jesus Christ. Then we truly live as a priestly nation. As Luke 1:72, 75 reads, we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life on earth. Amen.

**One word: Honor God by holding His words!**