



Bible Study
2014-2015

Heart of a Servant

The Gospel of Mark

LESSON 7

It only takes watching the Broadway musical “Fiddler on the Roof” once to forever be changed by the word “tradition.” As soon as the word is said, echoes of the lead character, Tevye, are heard singing the lyrics about a Jewish family’s traditions, social classes, and the roles of a matchmaker and rabbi. This opening song sets the theme for the entire musical, as villagers attempt to continue established traditions in the midst of a changing world.

There are all sorts of traditions we can adopt into our lives. In and of themselves, there is nothing inherently sinful about them. But in Jesus’ day, the Jews called their traditions “the fence of the law.” They were meant to protect the law and had come to carry more authority than the Word of God. In the Mishna, a collection of Jewish traditions in the Talmud, it records, “It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis than to contradict scripture itself.” Rabbi Eleazer said, “He who expounds the scriptures in opposition to tradition has no share in the world to come.”

In this particular chapter, we see two different qualities about Jesus. First, He comes to teach the Jews what truth really is, especially in light of the burden of their traditions. Second, He comes to help and minister to the Gentiles in miraculous ways, thereby starting an assault to bring down their prejudicial thinking and strongholds.

As Mark so aptly portrays, Jesus is a Servant-Teacher, burden-reliever, bondage-breaker, and freedom-seeker. May the words in this chapter bring grace and truth to free your heart of anything that is divisive or burdensome.

Read Mark 7:1-5

One of the most important yet unwritten principles for a missionary going to a foreign land is to learn the culture of the people. Innocent gestures or acceptable behaviors in America can inadvertently be offensive or social violations to others of a different culture. But as we read in the introduction, the “tradition of the elders” went past cultural courtesies.

1. Find a Webster’s dictionary or use the one online at www.merriam-webster.com. Look up the word “tradition” and write the ones that apply to our passage here.

- c. What is acceptable or unacceptable to the Lord regarding holiday celebrations? For instance, Santa Claus or Easter eggs?

5. Read Romans 14:1-13. What is the Lord speaking to you about from this?

Read Mark 7:14-23

6. In verse 14, Jesus calls everyone within hearing range to not only listen to what He had to say but understand the message. And though He spoke with the entire crowd, only His disciples pursued Him for further revelation. This is important for us to remember. When we don't understand the word of God, pursue Him further!

- a. No doubt the disciples had been raised with lifestyles that mingled practices commanded by God and practices commanded by the elders. Besides targeting their outward violations and traditions that attack God's word, Jesus targeted what makes for an inward violation against God Himself. Write down the 13 things from verses 21-22, that Jesus labels as evil and defiling and BIRTHED from the heart!

b. Jesus didn't target their dirty hands or unwashed cups, but their inward thoughts, outward actions secret desires, and outward responses. Use the Webster's dictionary again and write out the definition of "defile." Looking at the words above, are there any of them that you are surprised to see and know that they have power to defile a person before God?

c. In Titus 1:15-16, note that the person who continues in a lifestyle of defilement (sin) is not only unbelieving, but has become defiled in two more areas. What are they?

d. Mark 7:16 once again shows the disconnect between the professions of the mouth and the inward reality of the heart. Write out this verse in your own words.

7. Read and write what purifies our hearts from the things which defile it.

a. Acts 15:7-9

b. Hebrews 9:14

c. 1 Peter 1:22

d. Malachi 3:3

8. Warren Wiersbe contrasted man's traditions and God's truth in the chart below.

MAN'S TRADITIONS	GOD'S TRUTH
<i>Outward forms - Bondage</i>	<i>Inward faith - Freedom</i>
<i>Trifling rules</i>	<i>Fundamental principles</i>
<i>Outward piety</i>	<i>True inward holiness</i>
<i>Neglect & replace the Word</i>	<i>Exalts the Word of God</i>

According to Romans, the flesh will gravitate more to traditions than the things of the Spirit, and the Spirit will never honor works done in the flesh. Write out Romans 8:8 here.

9. Read about God's heart and His desire for you and I in Deuteronomy 10:12-13. Notice the word "your" is echoed repeatedly in these two verses. Why do you think He did this?

***"Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure;
Where your treasure is, there is your heart;
Where your heart is, there is your happiness."
~ Augustine***

Read Mark 7:24-30

10. Now we come to the only recorded place where Jesus leaves the area of Palestine and goes to the Gentiles approximately 40 miles from Capernaum. He is continuing to pull down the disciples' strongholds of segregation and prejudice, knowing that every human being needs a Savior, and no one is outside of His reach.

- a. Turn to Matthew 15 and read verses 21-28 for a slightly more detailed account of what happened in our passage. We see a woman who had to overcome many obstacles with her request for the Lord's intervention: her gender (society was male dominated at this time); her race (Gentile); the disciples' opposition and Satanic opposition. Have you ever been in a trial where it seemed that you had numerous obstacles coming against you? Briefly summarize.

b. In one sense, you can look at this passage through the lens of intercessory prayer. The mother is coming to Jesus on behalf of her daughter who is living her days in complete bondage to the enemy. Using only first names or initials, write down a list of people that come to your thoughts that are currently in the grips of the enemy.

c. After her cry for mercy, calling Him by His Jewish title “Son of David,” Jesus does not respond to her, but turns to the disciples and responds to them. Write out what she did in verse 25.

11. M. E. Baxter writes of this: “instead of giving way to despair, she looked away from her trouble to the face and the person of Jesus, and considering fully His hand of might and His ear of love, she pursued her plea. It is just this getting away from the thing prayed for, and dealing with the character of the God to whom we pray, which strengthens our faith for the answer.”

a. Letting go of the thing prayed for, while worshipping and grabbing hold of Jesus Himself. This can be hard when our heart is wrapped up tightly around someone or something we long to see God act upon. Take a moment to reflect on the character of YOUR God and Savior. Write down the truths of Who He is and what He is like and use scripture references.

b. The Jews referred to Gentiles as filthy, wild dogs, but in Matthew 15:26, Jesus said that it wasn't right to take food from the children of Israel and give it to their puppies. Her immediate response in the next verse reflects HER character and that of humility. Willing to take her place of nothing higher than a pet dog, she used Jesus' own words to count on His kindness for even the smallest portion of mercy she could obtain.

Look back at your answers to either 10a or 10b and then combine them with Jesus' own words about His character in 11a. Either use this space to write out a personal prayer of response or worship and pray wherever you are right now.

- c. *Optional for further study* - The two times Jesus commends "great faith" is in response to Gentiles, not the Jews. In both cases, the person coming to Him was interceding for someone else a distance away. If you need to, use a concordance to find the other Gentile Jesus commended and use a few sentences to summarize what happened to them.

***"Great faith is faith that takes God at His Word
and will not let go until God meets the need.
It can lay hold of even the slightest encouragement
and turn it into a fulfilled promise."
~ Warren Wiersbe***

Read Mark 7:31-37

Decapolis was a group of ten cities located in modern day Jordan. They were populated by both Greeks and Romans with similar cultures and lifestyles. Though most commentators agree that Jesus and His disciples were seeking a time of rest among these Gentile areas, He was no longer able to go anywhere without someone recognizing Him.

12. Now we have another example of intercession. Think of the man that is both deaf and mute. His means of communication with others is extremely hindered, so his relationships with others had to be greatly affected. But Jesus is not limited in the ways He can touch and communicate to anyone. G. Campbell Morgan said, "I am quite convinced if we could perfectly know these men we should discover the reason for Jesus' healing method. In each case, Christ adapted Himself to the need of the man." Answer each question or fill in the blanks below using verses 33-35.

- a. "He took him _____ from the _____."

Sometimes, the Lord will pull us away from the crowds or other people's attention, in order to heal us privately. His reasons are always for our good and for His glory though we may not understand. What does God promise us from Jeremiah 29:11?

b. What did Jesus do to the man's ears?

The finger of God is seen in many places of scripture. From writing the ten commandments on stone tablets to writing in the dirt before a woman caught in adultery. Jesus said in Luke 11:20 that He cast out demons with the finger of God and here He touches ears made to hear. Is there an area in your life where you desire the powerful finger of God to touch? Do you have ears that can hear Jesus speak to you, whether in His Word or by His Holy Spirit and prayer?

c. After Jesus spat and touched the man's tongue that did not work as it should, how did Jesus pray to His Father when He looked up to heaven?

Did you notice that Jesus did not speak words when He looked up to the Father? He groaned and this was His compassionate response to pain and suffering that sin had brought to the world. This word groan is also used in Romans 8:23 and 8:26. Summarize these verses in your own language, being careful not to lose the full meaning that is being conveyed.

- d. “Ephphatha” is an Aramaic word that means “be opened, be released.” All of creation has only one response to the Lord’s commands, and that is obedience. The Lord not only gave him the ability to verbalize, but he healed the man’s mind to formulate words and put them together plainly so that he could communicate with others. Are there times when you feel “tongue-tied?” Occasions where it is hard to speak to others about the Lord? Or do you have a difficult time communicating important things to others about your thoughts or your heart? Prayerfully reflect on your ability to speak to God and/or others. Write down any ways you feel you are bound or limited in your ability to communicate, when you know in your heart and according to the Word, that speaking out is necessary in particular instances. For example, when you have an open door to share Jesus with someone. Or when something is happening around you that is wrong and sinful and you believe the Lord and His truth needs to be spoken.

*“If I am afraid to speak the truth lest I lose affection,
or lest the one concerned should say, “You do not understand”,
or because I fear to lose my reputation for kindness;
if I put my own good name before the other’s highest good,
then I know nothing of Calvary love.”*

~ Amy Carmichael

*“Saints not only desire to love and speak truth with their lips,
but they seek to be true within;
they will not lie even in the closet of their hearts, for God is there to listen.”*

~ C. H. Spurgeon

13. A very significant statement was made by these Gentiles about Jesus. Write down, in all capital letters, the first sentence they said about Him from verse 37.

- a. In our lesson, we have brought our traditions, convictions, hearts, sins, desires and imperfections before the Lord. It would be good to memorize “He has done all things well.” What have you most learned about yourself or the Lord from this chapter?

***“A rule I have had for years is: to treat the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal friend.
His is not a creed, a mere doctrine, but it is He Himself we have.”
~ D. L. Moody***