

The Role of Traditions

- Last time preached on this text 3 yrs ago, focused last part lesson, where J: **vs. 21**; then lists long list sins, then **vs. 23**. So I said we have hrt prob; our hrts corrrptd by sin; by nature we're evil on inside; so, need sprtl care for hrts (not angiogram, echocardiogram), but perf cardiologist, J, who gave life cross to cleanse us, create in us clean hrt. That: focus last time. This time, for this sermon, I want focus on 1st part lesson and spend time thinking w/you re role/trads – bec here in Mk 7, this controversy btwn J & Phars is centered on role/trads.
- Here's what hapnd: group Phars come from Jrslm to Gal to invstgt what this rabbi J is teaching. It's lunchtime, so discs are having bite eat. And Phars saw **vs. 2**. Wait: we all wash hnds before eat, right? Teach kids from little on: wash hnds before eat, bec germs, dirt on hnds. Crnvr's remind us how imp is: wash hnds w/soap & hot water. If go restrnt, you'll find sign in bathrm: all employees must wash hnds, bec it's obvly good hyg wash hnds before eat. But it was not hyg Phars concernd re! Look at **vs. 3**. The concern re hndwshng had nothing do w/hyg but w/trads.
- So what these trads? Well, in OT God recorded his laws/coms for ppl follw. But yrs later, Phars took those laws, came up w/own set/rules, called trads/eldrs. Smtms these manmade trads: stricter than God's coms (like here: not just priests but evone); added. Othrtms these trads: actly loopholes, ways getting around law/God (i.e., later in Mk 7, J says they're using these trads to avoid honoring Fr/Mr (4th) – obvly God's will! So these trads/eldrs were adding to/subtrctng from GW. And when you invent manmade rules that God didn't commnd/authrz, and tell ppl they're sinning when don't keep those mnmd rules – term for that: legalism – when you invent/enforce rules that're not from God & accuse ppl sinning when they don't keep your rules. That's hapng here; Phars were accusing discs of sinning: **vs. 5b**.
- So let's pause there, think momnt re trads. We all have trads; it's good have trads. We have trads w/in fam: some ppl get tog w/fam ev yr on certain holidays; take children special place ev yr for bday; decorate Xmas tree same day ev yr; look wed photos ev wed ann – these all lovely fam trads. Also, natnl trads: parade Mem Day; fireworks 4th July; hand/hrt pledge/allgnc – natnl trads. Then there's ch trads, like: Xmas Eve candllght servc; Estr sunrise servc; ringing bells start servc; and countless other sacred trads observe in ch. And all these trads: meannngfl to us bec have sacred symblsm.
- Think re this: what's purp/trad? Purp/trad: teach/emphsz greater truth in order strngthn apprctn for tht greater truth. For ex, we love fam; that's great truth. So to strngthn that love: get tog w/fam holidays, celbrt bdays, look wed photos – sacred to us! Also treasure freedom as Amrcns; that's great truth. So honor fallen soldiers at Mem Day parades; celebrate freedom on Ind Day; honor flag – sacred trads to us. And then, of course, we have sacred trads in ch, too – many (talk later). But, purp for any trad is always: teach/emphsz greater truth in order strngthn apprctn for greater truth. Trad: very imp!
- Hwvr, today J teachng us: trads are not law; not comndd by God; so you're not sinng if don't follow a trad. But when we, like Phars, begin elevate our trads to same level as GW; and when actly let our trads become more imp GW, J has prob w/that! **Vs. 6-7**. And when you treat human rules as if God's laws, that's legalism. And when act like care re GW, but you're actly more intrstd in own trads than God's will, that's hypocrisy. Or, say this way: when call smthng sin that's not sin, that's sin. Catch?
- We don't want do that. Want Lord/Word be on top pedestal in hrts. So today let's think re role/trads (esp relgs/ch trads – bec this hndwshng thing: relgs trad) – among us. Smtms we're guilty of over prioritng trads (like Phars); othrtms we underappreciate them. Maybe it's helpful think in terms of 2 extremes, and re how carefully avoid those 2 extremes. 1st) Let's get rid all ch trads; any trad we hold sacred in ch: get rid, gone. But if do that, lose all kinds wndrfl teaching tools that help point us to J; lose sacred symblsm around us that HS uses to remind us what J's done for us & strngthn faith/him. For ex: take look around sanctry here, look for trads. Pr's robe (could wear suit/tie; focus on msg not man). Paramnts (don't need; remind us of ch yr). Ch yr, windows (don't have to have; walks us thru life/min of Xp, reminds us what did/taught). Candles (we have lights; but J light/wrld). Bap not trad; commanded by J; but: white gown, candle, even godprnts (none required for valid Bap; sins washed

away; light of faith; you have fellow Xians that love you, care re sprtl growth). HC not trad; J: do this in rembrnc me; but: kneel (postr/rvrnce; but not required for Com – gym). There just so many sacred symbols/trads here in ch that are imp to us. And if we get rid all these trads, then they can no longer teach us, point us to J! So that's 1st extreme: get rid all trads. 2nd extreme is that you overdo it; that you let teaching tool bcm more imp than what it's suppsd teach; that trad bcms more imp than Lord. I have seen trads taken way too far: so that God's ppl are confsd, distrctd, frstrtd in worship. Trad can nvr bcm more imp than Lord. Later in Mk 7, J: **"You have a fine way of setting aside the coms of God in order to observe your own trads... You nullify the Word/God by your trad that you have handed down" (9, 13)**. It's dangrous take trads too far, overemphsz.

- So where that leave us? How should we proprly undrstnd role/trads among us? 2 thngs come mind. #1) We should never forget that purp/trad: teach/emphsz greater truth so we apprct it more. And what is greater truth that ch trads are intended to teach, help us apprct? J! J is greater truth! Evry trad we hold sacred should always point us to J, magnify J! We don't just do things here at ch for sake/trad; do them to remem J. That's #1. #2) We should never let go of what's really imp. J said to Phars: vs. 8. You've let go. We never want let go of Gos, that life-chngng msg that Xp gave life cross and rose from dead for our salvation, and that thru faith in Xp we are redeemed, hvn-bound children/God. Never let go that; hold onto that, w/all might, bec that's what's really imp! So when we do those 2 thngs: see how ch trads point us to J, and hold onto Gos, then have a proper undrstndng of role/trads.
- Here's an assgnmnt for you: this wk I want you to think re all diff trads you have, in fam & commnty, and think re why they're imp to you. Then, want you think re trads we have here at ch, in sanctuary & wrshp services, and ask self: why is this imp? How this point me to J? Try conct the trad to the Gos. I think you'll find it's a healthy spiritual exercise for you. You might just grow in your apprctn for why we do what we do in ch. But much more imprtntly, you'll grow in your apprctn for your Sav J.

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

¹ 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.)

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?" 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."

¹⁴ Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."

²¹ For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person."



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