

Heartless Worship

Mark 7:1-13

September 29, 2024 Pastor Jory Nunn

Well, good morning again, everybody, please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark in chapter seven is where we are starting this morning. Last week was just a one-off sermon, just an introduction, if you will, to me and to you about, you know, where I am with the gospel. I wanted to make that really clear, lay a foundation for our relationship together and trying to decide where we're going to go after that, I asked the elders for some feedback, and we just settled on continuing on in Mark. You guys started with it, and we need to finish it. And so we're going to do that. We're going to continue on. We want some continuity there, and I don't want to miss out on it. We're coming to some really good stuff in Mark, and I'm excited about where we're going to, where we're going to go with this.

I'd like to pray here first before I actually get into the text. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we're coming to a place in Your word that is just, it's awe inspiring to me as I studied, and I am so grateful to be able to stand here before Your people to communicate the truth that is Your scripture here. This is such a powerful reality for us today, not only within the church but the culture we live in. Lord, we need to hear what You have to say, what the Spirit has to say to the church this morning, May it come through as powerful as You have intended it to and accomplish exactly what You have sent it forth to accomplish within the hearts of Your people. Lord, may we know You better because of it, and may we respond to You appropriately because of the reality of the truth. We pray all these things in Christ's name and for His glory. Amen.

We come to a place in the Gospel of Mark here where the Lord has really reached the pinnacle of His public ministry. This is kind of a transition period in His life where He's not going to be in public as much. He is going to be seen. There's going to be some crowds around Him, but this is the time where He's going to transition His main focus to His disciples. It's always been on His disciples, because His plan has always been that through them the gospel would go out into the world. However, in the beginning He was, and in the end, all the way up to the end, fulfilling prophecy that was spoken about Him in His life: healing people, doing miracles, casting out demons. All of these things had to take place, and it was to take place in a very, very public venue. The people were to know, according to these things, that your Messiah is here. He's present. This is Him. Everything that He did pointed to Him as Messiah; God in human flesh is now present on earth. And these last two miracles that He did in the end of chapter six is really the height of that. Him feeding the 5,000 or as it were, other people that were there present, not just men, women, and children, bringing it possibly ten, fifteen, twenty thousand people that He literally created food from Himself in the presence of all of thousands and thousands of people. There was no question whatsoever where it came from. As He was out in this deserted place, and there was no food anywhere to be seen other than this sack lunch from a little kid. There was no question where it came from. It came from the Lord. It came from His hands. And it's really the biggest

public display of His power that He ever showed on Earth was this miracle, as far as the amount of people that it actually affected in a single setting. And then the second one, even though it didn't have nearly the amount of people present for it is awe inspiring, and from a human perspective, simply impossible to understand that someone would walk on water. I like to spend a lot of time on the water. Never tried to walk on it. Every time I step in, every single time I go under. Humanly speaking, this is something that cannot happen. This miracle, of course, was primarily focused on not Jesus calming the disciples, but rather Him displaying who He was to them. You need to know exactly who I am. That's exactly what He says to them.

He says to them, "Take courage" in verse 50, "I am." "Take courage I am." And only God could truly say that, right? I mean, only God could say that just after He displayed what He did. Sure, Peter walked on the water, but fear and doubt stepped in, and He sank, right? With the Lord. He was revealing exactly who He is. And so this is really the pinnacle, the transition point.

What we see Mark doing here as He moves into chapter seven is he's going to draw a contrast from what Jesus has been teaching, who He is, as the Messiah, to the religious leaders. He's always contrasting throughout, but here is a real turning point where he says this right here. This major miracle of creating food, everyone saw this. This other miracle that was performed among the disciples, they saw. And now He transitions and is going to draw a contrast. That is your Messiah, as opposed to who these people are. As opposed to these people that are supposedly instructing you, supposedly teaching you. As opposed to Him God in human flesh, this is what you've been listening to. And He's going to draw that out in chapter seven here in the beginning.

This is also a transition point, by the way, where the religious leaders become increasingly hostile toward Jesus. Before they more were questioning Him, looking into the things that He was doing. Now they become hostile. It becomes clear after this that they want Him dead. They are not okay with what He's doing, not necessarily even with what He's doing, but what He's doing as it reflects what they're doing, as it exposes what they're doing. They're not okay with it. So again, He's going to spend less time with the crowds, and He's going to focus in more on the disciples and the religious leaders. When we see them step out and they're revealed in Scripture here, this is the way that they're going to be revealed, and He communicates with them pretty much the same way for the rest of the letter, for the rest of the book.

So in our passage this morning, if you're taking notes on the back side of your bulletin there, you'll see the title this morning is "Heartless Worship," and you've seen the theme in our worship this morning that that's really what this is all about this morning. This morning, we are going to see what worship is about. Worship is not music, by the way. We worship the Lord in song, right? We worship the Lord in prayer. We worship the Lord in the reading of His scripture. We worship in the preaching of His scripture. So this is all about worship this morning. And there is a type of worship that God is okay with. There is a type of worship that God is not okay with. And we're going to look at both of those things this morning.

And so in our passage we're going to see the Lord Jesus gives us a stern warning of how worship can become corrupted when the Word of God is changed or ignored. And that's key. When we change, ignore, add to the Word of God, worship fails. So you'll see there in the outline, we're going to cover this in three points. Number one, adding to God's word. We're going to see that in verses one through five. The implications of adding to God's word, verses one through five. Verses six through eight, we're going to look at what it means to neglect God's word, to neglect it. And then verses nine through 13, we're going to see what it means when it says that the Word of God is invalidated, invalidated. That's verses nine through 13.

So again, as I said in the introduction, we're looking at a contrast here in the beginning, Jesus here as Messiah, as king, as Lord, as opposed to something else. Mark chapter six, I need to take us back, just for a second. Take us back in Mark 6:56, I need to read that passage for you because the contrast is really going to come out clear by reading that. Mark 6:56 says this, "Whenever He" that is Jesus, "entered villages or cities or countryside, they were laying the sick in the marketplaces and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak, and as many as touched it were being cured."

That's an interesting statement. Something that is probably missed by our North American culture, is the fringe of the cloak. What does that even mean? Is that like this? The edge of a garment? Well, for a Jew, they knew exactly what that was. When Mark is saying this, he is talking about something very specific. And so we need to understand a little bit of context with that. That is, there is something on Jesus's garment that was identified that these people, when they were sick and they wanted healing, they just wanted to reach out and touch it. It wasn't that they were wanting to reach out and touch Jesus. They were touching something specific, and so it's important that we understand what that is. If you're taking notes, you can write down this passage and look at it yourself, but I'm going to read it. Numbers 15:37-40 talks about what that is on His garment. Numbers 15:37-40, says,

The Lord also spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God."

So that's what these tassels were for, that individuals who are part of the Jewish community, that is, those who are walking in accordance with the law of God, were to have on them these tassels. And it was just men, by the way, it was not the women that did this, but the men had to wear them. And so they had these fringes hanging down, and they had a cord of blue wrapped around them. And anytime somebody would be walking around with this, they would be seen and identified as somebody who honoured and obeyed the law of God. The religious leaders, Jesus talks about them in chapter 23 of

Matthew, He says they like to make their tassels long, right? They had them extended so everybody could see them flowing around. Wow. They must be really religious. They must honour the Lord and honour His law really well, at least on the outside right. Well, Jesus, of course, He, honouring the law of God, actually obeying the law of God, also had these on His body. And that's what these people wanted to do, is they wanted to reach out and touch the fringe of His garment. So Jesus being identified as one who obeys the law, one who honours the law, one who reads the law, one who listens to the law, is identified as someone who loves God.

And then Mark steps in in chapter seven and introduces some other people that look similar. They also had tassels. They also had blue cords tied around those tassels, but he's going to draw a contrast between the Lord and them.

So verse one of chapter seven, "The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem." So here we have the two groups that have come to Jesus. They have come to Him from Jerusalem. Scribes and Pharisees. Pharisees are those that outwardly look like they obeyed God more than anyone else. They were the most outspoken. They were the biggest teachers out in the public they were the ones that communicated, supposedly, God's truth more than anyone else. That's who the Pharisees are outward appearance of obeying and honouring God. Scribes, those are lawyers. Not lawyers where they're dealing with just law, like we have here, but lawyers in that they were professionals in understanding the Scriptures. If you had a question about the meaning of the Scripture, you go to a scribe because they're the ones that are going to know. They are the A team, as it were, from Jerusalem. When Jerusalem got word, somehow, don't know how they got word of this, mass miracle that Jesus just got through with performing feeding thousands and thousands of people, the Jerusalem Council, supposedly, it looks like they got together and said, "We need to send you guys to confront this. This thing is getting big." And so they send literally the best of the best to question Jesus. These are the most skilled at keeping God's law. That's who these people are – the most skilled at keeping God's law outwardly.

So what did they accuse Him of? They came to accuse Him of something because they needed to diminish what He was doing. They were getting a bad rap because of all the good things Jesus was doing. They weren't doing anything to help the people. They were just laying burdens on them. Well, this one, He was becoming really popular, and they became jealous. So what did they accuse Him of? What was the accusation? Surely, some law of God that He broke, right? Like these guys are the professional law keepers. So they're going to come to Jesus, and they're going to say this Mosaic law you are guilty of breaking, right? That's what we would expect them to do. Let's hear what they say.

[So they] gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse

themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?”

So there's the accusation. Nothing about the law of God. It's about tradition. Why do they not follow the traditions that have been handed down from the fathers, from the elders, whom you are to respect. Why are they not keeping those traditions? Could they accuse Him of not keeping the law? No, absolutely not, because He kept it perfectly, right. They couldn't accuse Him of anything that was just. They had to accuse Him of something else, and what they chose to accuse Him of is tradition breaking, some lame tradition, some man-made tradition.

This is not for sanitation purposes. You need to understand that this is not some law that they were bringing to Him that you must wash your hands before you eat. There is no law that states that. There's sanitation in the Levitical law with regard to making sure you clean yourself up because there's disease out there. It's just a sanitation thing. If it was a Mosaic law that was prescriptive, Jesus would have kept it, right. The disciples would have kept it. He would not have allowed them to eat their bread with a little bit of dirt on their hands. This is some tradition that they have invented.

We have a little bit of background historically with this, extra biblical information. They would love to hang their hands out in the presence of everyone when it was time to eat. They would sit like this, fingers pointed upright, and water had to be run across them while everybody was watching that they were eating with pure hands. It was a ritual, water running off, falling off the wrists. There's a unique thing here with the Greek language that we don't understand what it is when it says “wash with their hands” in verse three, it the word is something with fist. I don't know what it is, and no commentator had anything good to say about it, but something with the fist. Maybe like how we wring our hands like this, maybe that had something to do with it. I don't know. But the point is, the external information that we have, is they love to have everyone watch what they were doing as a ritual. Had nothing to do with sanitation, had nothing to do with any prescription from the Scripture. It was simply watch what I'm doing. Watch how I cleanse myself. Jesus, of course, understood this Levitical law regarding sanitation had nothing to do with worship. These guys are trying to turn it into something like worship. They're trying to worship God in these external things. Watch what I'm doing. See how holy I am. That's the attitude that they're portraying.

You can write this one down just for your own reference, Isaiah 65, this is really an illustration of the heart attitude that they have. In Isaiah 65 Israel is literally getting ready to be sent off to Babylonian exile. Isaiah is warning them about their false worship, their worship of false gods, idolatry. And it's really simple in the Pharisaical time, in Jesus's time, surely they were not bowing down to idols and graven images, but they were worshiping God incorrectly. They were making up these traditions to make it look like they were honouring God. Really no different. You can have idolatry in many forms,

and this was just another form of idolatry. It's really self-worship. Anytime you elevate self over God's law, what He has said, it's idolatry, self-worship. So Isaiah 65:5 says this regarding those people that were getting ready to get sent off to exile because of worshiping false gods. He says, quoting them. He says, "Keep to yourself. Do not come near me, for I am holier than you." That's the attitude. Don't come near me. Don't touch me. You might defile me. I'm holier than you are. That's the attitude that these Pharisees and scribes have. We understand that the law actually is trumped by tradition. That's what they're saying. You need to do what I am telling you to do, and what we have been told that we should do by the elders, not what God's law says. I am holier than you. Listen to me. That's what they're saying. That's what they're saying. Their traditions are the standard. In other words, "We are the standard, not God. That's what's going on here.

And so He's contrasting what the Lord Jesus is doing as a true follower of God's law to these religious leaders who are diametrically opposed to Him and His word. It's really no different. We can look at some of the things in our modern life, the Roman Catholic Church, is this way. They elevate tradition over Scripture. If the Church says it, it goes, and even on top of that, if the Pope says it, it goes. He's actually infallible. He can't say anything wrong. Tradition over scripture. Most false religions are this way. You have to add something to the Word of God. You can't just go with the Word of God. You have to add something to it. Mormons, they've got the pearl of great price, or whatever it's called. They got words of wisdom; they got continuing revelation. No, it's not the word of God, full stop. It's the word of God, *and*. It's Christ *and*. God's word, apparently, is not enough. And that's the issue here. They are adding to God's word. They are telling Jesus and His disciples, "You in what you are doing there is breaking tradition." Even though God's word had nothing to do with worship, with regard to cleaning your hands, nothing to do with worship, had everything to do with just simple sanitation.

So that's our first point. We are seeing that they are trying to add to God's Word with their tradition.

Next, we see neglecting God's word. That's verses six through eight that they are neglecting God's word. How are they neglecting God's word? I want to first of all say that when Jesus heard this, I can just imagine, based on His response here, that He must be fuming inside. The very word that He created, the very word that He authorized, the very word that He wrote through the Holy Spirit for them, adding to it. He must have just been boiling inside with righteous indignation. I'm not talking that He's sinfully angry, but as Holy God, He must just have been fuming that these people would actually come up and say that to Him, the one who actually was the author.

Look at Verse six, "And He said to them, 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of You hypocrites, as it is written.' It's interesting that He quotes Isaiah here again. As I said, this is a period of time when they were essentially worshiping self, that the religious leaders, they had elevated tradition, they had elevated their actions above God's Word. In Isaiah's time, they were bowing down to idols, and He says to them, "Not only was Isaiah prophesying as well to those people that were about to go in exile, but this applies

to you hypocrites.” He’s telling them that, that they are hypocrites. The indictment is really clear. Isaiah, he’s talking about you guys here. “You hypocrites.”

Hypocrites, that’s a really interesting word. It’s where we get our word “actor.” So you’re pretending to be something that you’re not. That’s what an actor is, right? When you see people on a Hollywood screen, they’re just acting. That’s not actually who they are. They’re playing a part. And so when He calls them a hypocrite, He’s saying “You’re an actor, a fake, a phony, an imposter, a pretender. You are saying that you are something when in reality you’re something else.” That’s what the indictment is, is a hypocrite pretending to be something that you’re not.

This is not a doing problem. There is no other group in Jewish history that does more than these guys. They add and add and add and add. Do this, do this, do this, do this. This isn’t a doing problem, not doing too much for God. I can’t tell you how difficult it is to look at so many activities in church that are just doing, doing, doing, doing and then neglecting what God has actually said for us to do. This is an indictment against us. If we add things to His Word, we are not worshiping appropriately. Now, there are things that we should do, right. There are venues that we should provide for teaching children’s church, Sunday school, care groups, things where we are studying and learning and growing together. Those things are prescriptive. We can actually identify those in Scripture that we should be teaching in that way. We should be gathering in that way. But if we just do things for the sake of doing things, we’re no different than the hypocrites. If we think that *doing* is worship, we’re no different than the hypocrites. We have to be careful what we get ourselves involved with.

As we talked about last week, you know, those of us that are in Christ, we’re actually through the gate, right? We’re in. So Satan can’t take us out. We’re in, we’re safe, we’re secure, but what He can do is distract us: worldliness and getting involved in things that we should not be doing at the church. We gotta be careful what traditions we hold on to. So it’s not a doing problem. It’s a worship problem.

It’s not even that they have the wrong God, right? Listen to what Isaiah says to them here, and what Jesus says to the hypocrites. He says, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites. As it is written, ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me, but in vain do they worship Me.’” They got the right God, right? You can have the right God and the wrong worship; and if your worship is incorrect, it is unacceptable to God. We don’t want to have the wrong worship. These religious leaders, these hypocrites, they had the right God, but they worshiped Him in the wrong way. Their heart, as it says there in verse six, was far from Me. Far from Me. John 4:24 Jesus put it this way. He said, “Those who worship Him,” that is when He’s speaking to the woman at the well. He’s telling her about the Father. He says, “Those who worship Him,” the Father, “must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” That’s really what worship is all about, in spirit, as in the spirit that is inside of you, joining together with your spirit as a man or a woman or a child, worshiping God appropriately as prescribed in what? Truth. Truth. That’s how we worship. That’s the only way to worship. That’s the only way we can worship. Anything that we do that does not fall under that category, under that form of worship,

whatever it is, it's not appropriate worship. It must be in spirit and in truth. That is, your spirit along with the Holy Spirit, guided by the truth of the Spirit, that's where worship comes from. That is, man's entire being must worship according to the truth of God's Word. Man's entire being must worship in accordance with the truth of God's Word.

This, of course, is not a new thing at all to the Jews. They've known this for a very long time. Deuteronomy chapter six. This is a great one, also for you to write down. Deuteronomy 6:4-6 says this. This is what's commonly known as the Shema. This is what Israel was to continually have upon their lips. This is how they remembered who their God was. Deuteronomy, 6:4-6 says this,

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

It's a heart issue. If your worship is lacking, if you're if your worship is weak, your heart's probably not in it. Maybe you're trying to look within yourself to worship God appropriately. There's no way your heart's in it because inside of yourself, where the Holy Spirit lives, He is only going to want you to worship in accordance with His Word. We look to His word to understand how He wants to worship. And it is sourced inside of us, out of a knowledge that He loves us, and we therefore love Him because He loves us. We love God, and we want to worship Him with a whole heart. External acts of worship without an internal heart of love, without an internal heart of concern for the glory of God through His word, are meaningless and empty. You can't do enough for God. Okay? He doesn't need anything. Any preacher that tells you that God needs you is a liar and a false teacher. God needs nothing. Our response to Him, because of what He has done for us, because of what He has done for us, is we love Him. That's our response. We desire to do what is right for Him. He doesn't need us for anything. External acts of worship, without an internal heart of worship that is concerned with love for God and His Word is meaningless and empty, and that's where Jesus is driving to here, meaningless and empty.

If you were to put up a center point heading of this passage of Scripture, it's verse seven, the beginning of verse seven there, “but in vain do they worship Me.” That word “vain” there is you may understand. It's just emptiness. It's void. There's nothing to it. Clouds without rain. Smoke and no fire. It's just empty. It's meaningless. Pointless. It does not accomplish its intended purpose. That's another way to put it. This type of worship, worship that has no heart, no love for God, doesn't do anything, doesn't do anything for you, and God is not pleased with it, doesn't accept it.

So Jesus' indictment here is an indictment against unbelief. That's really what it is. Their unbelief. Traditions were so ingrained in these people that their worship had literally become worthless, no value to it whatsoever. “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ And that's what they were doing, these traditions that we have, that we

have got from the elders, that is doctrine, that is absolute truth. That's what they're saying. Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

So instead of rightly interpreting the Scripture, which is what the Pharisees and scribes were supposed to do, right? When they read and understood the Scripture, they were supposed to teach the people "this is what you should do." Instead of doing that, they wrongly interpreted it. They took it out of context and added all kinds of things to it. Primarily, it seems, if you look at Jewish writings, we'll give them a little bit of a benefit of the doubt here, but here in the latter days, some of their writings it appears that they were trying to kind of fence the law in, like protect it, like I'm not going to do any of those things so that I don't transgress this. It seems like there's some of that in there, but in doing that, what they did is they put a whole lot of weight on people that they just couldn't obey. They couldn't follow it. Impractical and impossible. So instead of just simply saying, "This is what the Scripture says, therefore we must do this in accordance with what the scripture says," they took it to, well, I'll give you a fine example.

There's a Jewish doctrine called the Mishnah. If you want to look it up, you can, and if you want to read it, you can. It's a massive volume of these traditions. It is Jewish leaders over hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, adding to the Scriptures. It's basically a running commentary on the Scriptures. And there's everything from, oh, that kind of seems like that fits to that is the most foolish thing I have ever heard in my life. Why in the world would they say something like that? So if you want to research yourself for that on that document, it's called the Mishna. Ingrained into their lifestyle, ingrained into who they were, not rightly interpreting the Word of God, but rather taught their own precepts, not God's teachings, traditions.

By the way, we need to make sure and say these traditions in and of themselves, they're not bad, right? But we have to bring them in accordance with the Word of God. We have to bring them in line with the Word of God. We do this because if you have some tradition that trumps the Word of God, dump it. It does not belong in your life. It does not belong in the church. You're just doing rote things that are meaningless. Bring all of your traditions, no matter what they are, underneath, I want to say suppressed by that's not the right word but bring them in subjection to the Word of God. We do this because. Okay, take me to a Scripture. That's how we should deal with traditions. So in and of themselves, they're not bad. They just need to be in subjection to the Word of God. *Here*, underneath the Word of God, not *here*, superseding the Word of God. If it cannot be prescribed or taught through the Scripture, clearly and truly, dump it. You shouldn't be doing it.

Some things to illustrate this that can be a stumbling block for us as we come for corporate worship, music is one of them. We've been singing that song for so long. Well, the words are wrong. It actually posits the wrong thing. It's presenting a false gospel. It's diminishing the glory of God. Why in the world are we singing it? Well, we've been singing it forever. John Wesley wrote it, whatever the case is. If it's not right, in accordance with the Word of God, we get rid of it. And every single one of us, whether you're here or in the pew, has the right to say, "Should we be singing that song?" Every one of you has

the right to come to one of the elders and say, “That song that we sing, the way it said this, is that right?” It may be that it's right, and you just need to conform yourself to the Word of God, and you just learned something, awesome. But it may be that we missed something. All of us have the responsibility, obligation, right and privilege to make sure that our music is in accordance with proper worship. Thank God for the leaders that we have that make sure that's true right now.

How about the order of service. What if we did four songs instead of three? That's it. I'm out. I'm going to a different church. Beware of traditions that we do them and we try to do them appropriately, but if something's changed up that doesn't contradict the Word of God, it's okay. We're going to shake things up a bit with regard to that. One day I might not wear a jacket. Is that going to get me kicked out? Traditions in and of themselves are not bad, but we just need to subject them to the Word of God. Are they okay in accordance with the Word of God? Can we have drums here? Half the church might disappear. I wouldn't. What about chairs? What if we put chairs here instead of pews? Just trivial, stupid things. That's what Jesus is dealing here with these Pharisees.” You are such hypocrites,” is what He's saying. Totally ignoring the truth of the Word of God for your traditions. We don't want to be those people. We don't want to be those people.

Let's move on to our next point. Next, we look at invalidating the Word of God, invalidating it. First, we saw adding to it, then we saw neglecting it, now we're going to look at what it means to invalidate the Word of God. That's verse nine through 13.

His indictment here is furthered on them by giving them an illustration, a real-life illustration from the Scripture of what they are doing and the implications of it. Verse nine, read with me. “He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.” Experts at it, professionals, what an indictment. The best thing that you do in your life is what He just told them. The very best thing that you can do is actually neglect the Scripture. What a horrible indictment. You're experts at it. You set it aside, no scripture. No this is what you need to do: you need to follow what I say. You're an expert at it, a professional. The most paid, highly paid person in the room with regard to setting aside the Word of God. Absolutely terrifying indictment. Not experts in the law, not experts in obeying the law, not professionals in teaching the law, but professionals in setting aside the law, setting aside the Word of God for traditions' sake, skilled in it. Best at work.

Of course, Jesus, when He responds to them here and in this illustration that He gives them, He does not appeal to tradition, so contrasting what they say, you need to obey the tradition of the elders, He comes back and says, “No, here's what you're actually doing.” And He gives them an illustration from the Bible, from the Scripture. He says, “For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother and He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’” Two passages that He amalgamates together. He brings them both together, Exodus 20:12 and Exodus 21:17. So Honour your father and mother. We know this as the fifth commandment. Honour your father and mother that your days may be what, long upon the

earth. It's the first commandment with a promise. Who wouldn't want a promise in accordance with obedience? If I do this, this is going to happen. It's a promise of God, Honour your father and mother.

Now, children are to obey their parents, but adults are not to obey their parents. I don't have to obey my dad and mom anymore because I'm not a child right. Now, what is the time limit on honouring your parents? There isn't one. Some of you may have parents here that are not honourable. They're really hard to honour. And I get that. I understand that, but you have to figure this out in how you can honour them, what ways you can honour them. And Jesus gives a really simple illustration for the Pharisees, but it's super simple for us as well. If you have parents that you just, you don't even know how to honour them, maybe they don't have enough provision in their life. Well, He's going to tell them right here. This is a way that you can honour them. This is prescriptive for us as well.

One thing I want us to look at here before we look at what He's actually talking about with regard to setting aside money for God, is that the prescribed punishment for disobeying these two commands is what? Death. It's death in the Mosaic law. If you dishonoured your parents or spoke evil of them, the entire assembly that is all of Jerusalem, all of Israel, is supposed to bring you out, no matter how old you are, It doesn't say anything about age. "This rebellious child of mine," as it's spoken of in Numbers, that the mother and father come to Moses, "rebellious child of ours will not listen." What does the Lord say to do? Take them outside of the camp and stone them. They were to be put to death for dishonouring dad and mom or speaking evil of them. The whole assembly was supposed to come together around this person and stone them to death. It is a serious deal to dishonour our parents. So we, as followers of Christ, this side of the cross, we have to figure out how to do that well. Figure out how to honour your parents. If they have nothing honourable whatsoever within their life, they still brought you here. They still were part of creating you. You just have to figure out how to do it. But the prescription is the same. We are to honour our parents.

So what He is saying to them here, "No, I'm not the law breaker. You actually are." That's what He's saying to the Pharisees here. God's law that you're breaking by your traditions, is actually deserving of death. You Pharisees, you hypocrites, you scribes, you deserve death for what's going on right now. That's what He's telling them.

For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death'; but you say, 'If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother;

So what was going on here? Given to God. It's literally dedicated to God. This teaching that they have is they could be as wealthy as they wanted, and if they didn't want to give their moneys either to their parents or anyone else, they would say, "Oh, no, no, that's dedicated to God. Can't help you. That money is dedicated to God." And so they were instructing people, whatever you have, you need to dedicate it to God. That's what Corban means. And so even the poorest of the poor, the one who would want to

actually honour their father and mother, even if they're not poor, the tradition was, whatever you have dedicated to God. That's a real holy thing to do. And so what He's saying to them is, you no longer permit Him to do anything for His father and mother. Why? Because it's dedicated to God. Dad, Mom, I really want to help you, but I can't. The money's all dedicated to God. "And thus invalidating" verse 13, "thus invalidating the Word of God." So what God intended for in that Scripture, to honour father and mother, to care for them in their need, the most simple, the most basic command of God in caring horizontally for your family, you've invalidated the Word of God with regard to that. You no longer allow people to even help their dad and mom in their time of need because you have dedicated it to God. And really, it was a way for the religious leaders and Pharisees to keep their wealth and say, "Well, that's God's money. I'm going to take care of it, but that's God's money. I can't give it away." Hear the hypocrisy in that? Invalidating the Word of God.

You know Jesus, He was on earth so gracious, so kind, loving, gentle. But when it came to the religious leaders of the day, He had no patience for them whatsoever. He didn't have anything kind to say to them, the ones that represented the religious leaders of the day in this way. There were some who came to Him, right? Nicodemus, He found the way. But for those that posit that religious traditions transcend the Word of God, no patience whatsoever. Didn't have anything good to say to them because they burdened the people with burdens they couldn't bear. They put weight on them.

Jesus said to the masses, "Come to me, all you who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus did that for them. Religious leaders wouldn't do that at all. We need to be careful what weight we put on our people. I speak to the leaders in the church; we need to be careful the weight we put on our people. We need to be careful the weight we put on each other. We want our worship to be one that comes from the heart for love of God and His Word and those things that we do, need to be in accordance with that. The warning is stark. The warning is intense. Of anyone who would ignore, add to, or invalidate the Word of God, I'm going to read a section for you. Just listen. In Matthew chapter 23, you can write it down if you want, Matthew chapter 23 this is Jesus's encounter with Pharisees. And I'm going to close with this.

On a different occasion, this is what He had to say about them. This is their indictment. It's sometimes known as the eight woes, and I just want you to listen to how God feels about someone who would add to His word, somebody who would ignore it, or somebody who would invalidate it by their teaching. This is what Jesus had to say to them, verse 13 of chapter 23,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

Verse 33 He says this,

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

This is not some trivial thing when we add a tradition that cannot be founded in Scripture and teach men and women and children to obey and honour it over the Word of God. God's indictment on people that would do such is really a question. How in the world would you escape hell, if you do such a thing?

We need to be careful on adding to God's Word by neglecting it, or, even worse, completely invalidating it by our traditions.

Father, we are grateful for Your Word as it is written. We are grateful that it's unchanging, that when You wrote it, You actually meant it to mean something. You intended it. One of the rules that we try to live by whenever we read the Scripture is we need to understand what the author's intent was. That will help us to not be led astray, to neglect Your word, to add to it or invalidate it. Lord, it meant what it meant when You wrote it. Help us to be diligent to discover that. Help us to be diligent to teach that and help us to be aware of any tradition that does not subject itself to the Word of God. Lord, may we glorify You in our worship in understanding the Word and teaching the Word and reading the Word and then living out the Word in our own lives. All to the glory of Christ and God's people said, Amen, You.