

Trading Truth for Tradition
Mark 7:1-13

This morning, we return to Mark's gospel, and we will keep making our way as we start Mark chapter 7. And the last couple times, we actually had some momentum going here as the last couple times we were in Mark's gospel, we had some pretty classic accounts in the life of Christ when you think about it. Alright? The account of Jesus feeding five thousand or, more than likely, twenty thousand with the women and the children that were involved - you know, an account that everybody knows, you don't even need to be a Christian. Most people are aware of this concept, of Jesus feeding the thousands and multiplying food with this bread and fish. And then Jesus walking on water, something also that is pointed out and known, these amazing, supernatural, miraculous events as Jesus was ministering to His disciples and to the masses of Galilee and the Jewish nation. And we ended with a lot of healings that just kept taking place as they made their way back over to the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee, and we continue to see this fame and popularity of Christ that just increases and grows.

But Mark does a good job. He does a good job of keeping a balance. As he presents Christ, we definitely see His fame, His popularity - that people like Him, and they're moved towards Him. They're attracted to Him in what He does, but at the same time, Mark keeps it level and reminds us that there's still a good amount of people that aren't very excited about Christ. There are those that are not enthusiastic about Jesus and what He's doing, and we've already seen them mentioned earlier in the gospel as we've thought about the religious leadership, the Jewish leaders of the Pharisees and the scribes and even the Herodians these people that felt threatened by Jesus. And this morning, we get to revisit that and see that while Jesus' ministry is expanding and growing even with the sending out of the twelve and their preaching and their miraculous ministries, that there are still those that're completely opposed to Jesus, and that's what we get to find this morning in our text.

So, let's look at Mark 7. We'll look at verses 1-13 this morning. And we'll see the controversy continue into next week as well, when we go to that text in the following verses. But this morning, Mark 7:1-13; "Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were

defiled, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, ‘Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?’ And he said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.’ And he said to them, ‘You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, ‘Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban’ (that is, given to God)— then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do’ ”

Just from a general reading as we get into our text, you can already tell the tone. It’s not as pleasant as maybe we’ve seen, as people have been fed, or people have been amazed and astonished at the ability and the power of Christ, but instead, opposition, controversy, challenge, accusation in this text. The hostility continues to brew, and we notice this, even, just from the very beginning. And as we’ll work our way through the text, we’ll kind of see three movements. And the first movement is, really, a lot of introductory matter that we find. The first movement we see is the assembly, here, to accuse - the assembly to accuse. And that’s, really, all of verses 1-5 as Mark is setting this up, this entire story, as we often see. Not just to go right into the action and show us the controversy, but to set it up. So, you and I as the reader can understand why this is so controversial. And this begins in verses 1-2 which is where we find congregating. In verses 1-2, congregating, the gathering together of people, and we see the specifics of who is gathering together in verses 1, really, specifically verse 1; “Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem...” There they are, that group that we have seen before, the Pharisees and also the scribes. The Pharisees, the spiritual elite of the people, of the masses, the ones who were known for how much they held to the Law and how much

they knew and their knowledge. This was overwhelming. The ones that were priding themselves in even living it out, and they would make sure everyone else saw it. These were the ones leading God's people at this time, these Pharisees, the spiritual heroes of the people, and then also the scribes.

And just as a reminder, this isn't the mundane type of scribe that says, here's this. Copy it. Thank you. All right. You're done. Right? This is a scribe that does in fact do the copying but knows the Law so well. They have it memorized. They're the ones that are called lawyers. They're the experts in the Law. When there are these confusions and kind of wonderments, they come to these experts, these scribes. These two groups mentioned here together, and sometimes, there's some crossover where you had a scribe that was in fact a Pharisee as well - these two groups coming together, gathering, and the last time we saw them, it did not go that great. They were, really... They were having a tough time with Jesus hanging out with sinners and tax collectors, and they were questioning that, and they're even questioning the way Jesus acted on the Sabbath, and they thought, wait this is weird how you're acting on the Sabbath, that you're actually treating it like a day of rest and not following our little meticulous laws. And they actually had a delegation come from Jerusalem to observe Jesus and come up with the conclusion that Jesus was demon-possessed. That was what they concluded last time that we saw them interacting with Jesus.

Jesus had to respond of course and say it's unfortunate, but you have blasphemed the Holy Spirit. You've completely denied the work of God's Spirit in and through the Messiah Jesus Christ. So, that was the last encounter, and now we revisit and we come back to see what will happen this time. There's a drawing together. There's a congregating, a coming together, and it's these spiritual elite. Right? ...these authorities that probably feel threatened. And why are they coming together? More than likely (and we have several different options), one is, well, Jesus just keeps upping His game. As we see some of these miracles in His ministry, it just keeps increasing. Right? ...walking on water? ...free food? He does it. All right. It's amazing stuff what He's doing and bringing. But add to it now, Jesus had just sent out His twelve. He sent them out two by two, and they were going throughout Galilee and Israel, preaching about the Kingdom, talking about Jesus. The message is getting out there again. It gets the attention of these Pharisees and these scribes. They feel threatened. They

feel like Jesus gets all the popularity, and here they are, sidelined as the ones who are leading God's people.

So, they feel this need to come up once again, gather to Jesus, see what He's doing and try and respond to it. That's what we find in verse 1; "Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed." Now, isn't this interesting? They come to observe. They come to respond to what's been taking place, and we note that more than likely, this wasn't the first thing that they saw right away. This probably was a gradual thing, of these Pharisees showing up, and scribes following Jesus around, and more than likely, witnessing a lot of what we saw at the end of chapter 6 which was healings like nobody's business, really. If you think about it, people were bringing their sick, bringing their family – villages, cities, the countryside, you name it. Everyone was getting healed by Jesus. So, as these Pharisees and scribes are assembling to Jesus, they have to be witnessing this. They have to be seeing this amazing, miraculous ministry that just keeps happening in greater amounts through Jesus.

But what catches their eye, what causes them to kind of go, ooh, we need to say something about that. Ooh, that's interesting. What is it that causes them to rise up and engage? Is it the free food? No. Is it the healings? Is it the walking on water? No. Hand washing! Riveting isn't it? Hand washing! Alright? "...they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed." That is what gets their attention. You have to realize the context of all this. It's absurd. This man, doing what is, really, unparalleled and unprecedented; Jesus and all of His ministry, and yet they pick out hand washing! I mean, that's like going to Yosemite, this amazing part of creation that we have in California, going there for the first time to take it all in with your own eyes and then just looking down and saying look at my new hiking shoes. These are awesome. Hey, did you see these yet? Oh, that's a nice view. Look at these! Alright? This is what they're doing. They're seeing this amazing ministry of Christ, and all they can latch onto is hand washing. Pretty pathetic, but it reminds us this is Mark's way of showing, look there are these people that exist that are not very excited about Jesus, and actually, they're coming to Jesus with all criticism because they are hostile. They are opposed to what He's doing. They're at odds with His ministry.

The reason why hand washing is significant is what we learn in the next two verses. In verses 3-4, we see cleaning. This background is what Mark gives us, this kind of understanding of why this is actually significant and not just something that's kind of out of nowhere. And you'll notice in your Bible (I mean, most English Bibles have this in parenthesis. Right?), a parenthetical statement here is what is being made by Mark, and he's helping us out. If you're reminded, you remember, he's writing to a Gentile audience, so that's non-Jewish people. These non-Jewish people don't have Jewish background and understanding and customs. They don't know. So, he gives a little background, and it helps us out, too, since we're not there. Verse 3-4; "(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)" This background into how the Pharisees operate, how they live.

And first of all, just notice that it says, "(For the Pharisees and all the Jews ...)" do these things. There's this clear impact and influence the Pharisees have. This shows that even if all the people didn't perfectly hold to and do what the Pharisees did, they at least had this understanding, and they had this model before them in the Pharisees. The Pharisees were detailed and mundane and meticulous in how they carried out all these things that Mark just briefly mentions for us, and the Jews, all the Jews, sought to try to emulate that in some way or another. So, why? Why do the Pharisees and scribes focus on the disciples' failure and hand washing? Well, what we kind of notice is that it's, actually, not really anything to do with dirty hands, but it has everything to do with how they washed for the meal. So, it's not like they were out, you know, playing basketball, and their hands are dirty, and they're coming in to eat food and say, hey, wash your hands, and they forgot to. It's not that they had dirty hands. It was actually all in the way that they actually went about cleansing and washing their hands. It wasn't in the way that they did it. The phrase actually is using a closed fist, and so some people speculate what does this even mean? Is it a certain way of washing? Is it a certain amount of time in washing your hands? Is it a certain amount of water? We don't know, but somehow, they had this specific way it had to be done, this ritual, this purifying ritual, that they would practice.

So, where did they get this from? This is our exposure and understanding here. Mark kind of opens the lens and opens our ideas to understanding that there was this "...tradition of the elders..." at the end of verse 3. They held "...to the tradition of the elders..." What is that? Is that in our Bibles? Do you have a book called Tradition of the Elders? No, you don't. Alright. We have the Old Testament. We have what has been handed down to us, starting with Moses and writing his books and beyond that, but "...the tradition of the elders..." this is something different. And what it was was actually this kind of oral law, what was passed down from generation to generation just through word, just speaking, and actually, they suppose and they actually go so far as to say that this started even with Moses. So, Moses did get the Law from God, and he wrote that down, and they have that, but also Moses got other things orally from God, and he spoke those to the people, and they spoke it to the next generation and the next generation, and over time, this kept getting passed down. Well, that's not actually fully true because there's no way to verify that, and what we do know about what God wanted Moses to know is written down. So, it's not a big deal, but for them it was, and so this was this kind of oral law that had been passed down, these traditions, and they elevated them so high, and they were so set on them. In fact, they viewed them so important that that causes them to encounter Jesus in this way here.

And it goes beyond just hand washing as you can tell. It goes even to their whole body and how they deal with the marketplace and even the cups that they use. It kind of becomes this really detailed thing, and there's a lot to it. In fact, even though we aren't there, and we don't know the oral law, we do have a sense of what some of this was because in A. D. 200 (it's a little bit after the time of Christ), they wrote it down. They finally actually wrote it down, and that's what's called the Mishnah. The Mishnah is this kind of Jewish oral law that supposedly had been passed down, was prevalent and alive in the time of Christ, and finally was written down around A. D. 200. So, we can look at that and match it up, and there is some way to understand and get a view to how they were carrying out the law and trying to protect the law, even. And essentially, what it was (if we had to kind of picture it), we have God's Law. Alright? We have what is written clearly in Scripture, what God told Moses, what he wrote down, and what the people of Israel knew. Very clear. Alright? You are not to transgress this. You're not to disobey. This is God's Law. However, to be careful and to go the extra mile, this is where the oral law came in, this Mishnah. Alright? This oral law came

in, and it tried to function as this fence around the Law of God, and so, the thinking went that, hey, if you at least hold to the oral law, the oral tradition, then there's no way you're going to break God's Law. Win-win. That's good. We're extra careful, extra safe. So, this was what they were practicing. This is what they were teaching. This is what they were doing and encouraging.

And that is what kind of merges into our text here; "(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders ...)" Alright? This is this fence around the Law. This is the way that they went about trying to keep God's Law. And it is just absolutely ridiculous. The last and the longest of the six divisions of the Mishnah is given over to the matter of cleanness. This is the longest division of the Mishnah that we have - is all about cleanliness so to speak. And notice just how it goes. Mark just gives us a brief little sampling of it. So, you have hand washing for one, and there's a way to wash your hands before you eat. Then you also have this idea of "(... ..and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. ...)," and that's not a reference to their hands, that's a reference to their body. So, they were actually so careful and trying to be so concerned with how they could be unclean, that even when they went to the marketplace, they recognized there's a lot of ways I could be unclean when I go through the marketplace. I don't know what people have touched, I don't know what people I've touched, and I don't know what Gentiles may have been here and all these different ways that I could become unclean just by walking through the marketplace. So, if they'd come from the marketplace, and they're about to eat they'd take a bath. They would actually bathe themselves. This was how detailed they were with trying to be clean and cleanse themselves.

Then, in verse 4, not just the marketplace and their body, but "(...there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)" And you can start to see how this gets out of control. Alright? If you're suspicious about the marketplace, if you're suspicious about the people you bump into, then what about your own vessels, your own cups, your pitchers, your pots, the things you have in your house? How easily those can become unclean and how you need to now cleanse those and go through this kind of purity ritual. And to give you a sense, the Mishnah devotes thirty chapters to the matter of the purification of vessels. That sounds like some fun reading, thirty chapters on the

purification of vessels. It's out of control, but this is just kind of how outlandish this was and how they had really (as Jesus is going to confront) gone beyond and missed the point, but this is what they're doing.

And you can only imagine what the people must've been facing. Not only do you have God's Law, His standard of perfection, that you're trying to live up to and manifest in your own life, but now you have this, this extra fence around it, the oral tradition of your leaders these Pharisees and scribes. Think about if Peter a Jew, a Jew by birth - Peter - he called living under the Law of Moses a burden; "...a yoke ... that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear..." Then, imagine the difficulty of living according to not just the Law, but also this tradition. This is why Jesus has to confront this. As several times in the gospels, and in Matthew 23:4 later on, He really lets the religious leaders have it, and in this part, He actually mentions this. "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger." This is what it'd become. This is what religion had become for the Jewish people, this burden, and unnecessarily so. It had elevated to a whole new level beyond just the Law of Moses and what they had.

And this is what is going through the Pharisees' mind, the scribes' mind, that they don't interact with the ministry of Christ per se, they interact with their tradition. Their tradition is what causes this that leads them in verse 5 to actually act on this, and that's where we have challenging. So, we had them gathering together in the congregating. We see the background now of this cleansing and purifying that they get from the oral tradition according to the elders that's later written down in the Mishnah, and now they act. In verse 5, "And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' " They come up with this question. So, after noticing, of all things, this hand washing that's taking place that's not quite up to par in their mind and doesn't meet the fence around the Law, after noticing that, they go to Jesus with this question. And you think, well, why Jesus? Why not just go to the disciples? Well, first of all they're threatened by Jesus, so they need to address Him, and they want to put Him on the spot. But second of all, He is the clear leader, and so whatever the disciples do kind of shows back on Him and He takes responsibility for it in this sense, thus they go right to Jesus, the leader, the one responsible for this.

And their question really isn't a sincere question. It's an accusation. A challenge is what it is because you might read it and think, aye, could be sincere. "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" So, you know the mentioning of the defiled hands or asking why, but notice just this phrase in the middle; "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders..." You see, they're not really asking about the hands and the cleansing, they're asking something bigger. Why don't they live like us? Why don't they do what we do. This is just one instance, but there are so many others, and you guys just don't do what we do. What's up with that? The Pharisees are challenging Jesus. Why don't your disciples...? Why don't they walk..." This word for living, your conduct, why is their conduct not like our conduct? Why is their living not like our living? It's not matching up here, and, clearly, it should make sense because we're following the tradition of the elders, and why aren't they doing that? If they were, they'd be looking like us. It's an accusation that they throw against Jesus.

So, Mark has officially set this up for us, and we can picture ourselves being there, picture these spiritually elite people coming up and throwing this challenge at Jesus. And we have to ask, again, how will Jesus respond? What will He do in a situation like this? And He has a perfect response as always. He has this authoritative assessment in verses 6-8. He has the authority, and He has the ability to cut right through their thinking and their argumentation, and that's what He does. He gives us assessment of what they've done with the authority that He has, and that comes in verses 6-7 first, where He references this prophecy of hypocrisy. He gets right to it and addresses what the issue is here, this hypocrisy, and He strengthens His argument through the prophecy of Isaiah. Looking back again, here, at verses 6-7; "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" Well, Jesus gets right to the point. He gets right to the point; well, correct, right, successful, was Isaiah's prophecy. When Isaiah wrote this down, it was spot on. He was spot on when he prophesied of you hypocrites.

Addressing them, Jesus doesn't beat around the bush. He doesn't try and go, oh, maybe we can find some common ground here, and maybe we can sift through the tradition of the elders and kind of decide what's in and what's out, and maybe, we can come to an agreement here. Jesus draws a line, and

He makes it very clear. This is just hypocrisy. This's absolutely wrong, and Isaiah even spoke of you. And it's a wonderful irony because as this passage goes, these men are viewing themselves as devoting their life to upholding what God has said in His Word, and they think they're doing that by adding these extra commands. And here Jesus is responding to them by using God's Word. Jesus has to use God's Word to show them just how far off they had gone. What did Isaiah say? "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me..." This typical thing that we've even seen in our day, but how it's so clear and evident here. They had all the show but no substance. They had the ability to speak correctly. They had the ability to impress people and to maintain their position of authority amongst the Jews. They spoke this way. They spoke the part. They were honoring God with their lips. But the next statement is devastating; "...their heart is far from me..."

God who sees right through. He knows all, is not fooled for one second at this; "...their heart is far from me..." Their worship? How about their worship in verse 7? "...in vain do they worship me..." It's empty. It's just empty worship. Why is it empty? Because they teach "...as doctrines the commandments of men." What they uphold and preach and proclaim as the most important thing is really what man has said and not what God has said. It's absolute hypocrisy. It was alive in Isaiah's day as he dealt with these other leaders that were trying to influence the people and their hypocrisy, and here it is with the Pharisees, all show and no substance, far from God but thinking that they were right on track and leading the people well.

Their teaching amounted up to emphasizing what man had taught, and this is where Jesus is stepping in. We've seen Him already as the tender and compassionate shepherd, the way that He sees the people, and He knows that they lack leadership, and He comes to them, and He teaches them. And then we see this other side of Him where He sees how the people are... they're being abused. They're being led by this terrible leadership. This hypocritical leadership. And so, Jesus comes to protect as well. And that's what He does as a good shepherd, protecting His sheep from these Pharisees and scribes. In verse 8, He gives the basic conclusion of this which is the practice of holding fast. What is the object of their holding fast? What do they cling to? In verse 8, "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." What do they hold fast to? Not "...the commandment of God..." not at all, but instead, "...the tradition of men." I mean, just imagine the

controversy in this statement. Already has Jesus now quoted from Isaiah the Word of God. The prophet of God, He's quoting from him to expose their hypocrisy. Now, He just flat out says it. You have left. You have abandoned the Word of God. Let me make it very clear; you have abandoned the Word of God. That's what this word... This word "leave," it's the same word that is used when the disciples decide to cast their nets and they stop their fishing, and they quit their businesses to follow Jesus. They leave it. When they leave their parents, and they leave their households, to follow Jesus, they abandon everything for the sake of Christ. And here these men, this leadership, has abandoned the Word of God, the very thing that they think they're upholding.

I mean, their life's work is committed to studying and practicing and then teaching this, what they think is the Word of God, and yet, they've completely missed the point. It's like someone coming to inspect you and your job, inspecting a sheriff or a fireman. Telling a fireman, you know, you guys drive around in these red trucks and things like that, and that's great, but you don't really put out fires or save people from them. They think, oh, wow!, well, that's a bummer because that's kind of what we're supposed to be doing. Or, you know, you sheriffs and, I know you've got the lights and the flashing and the uniform and the gun, but you don't really protect people or create peace. In fact, you don't even arrest criminals. Alright? You kind of think that's the very thing we should be doing. So, here comes Jesus telling them you guys think really that you are committed to the Word of God, but you've abandoned it, actually. You've left it. You've left the Word of God, and what do you cling to? What do you hold fast to? "...the tradition of men." What man has said. He uses this word multiple times in our passage. He also describes it as observing. They observe. They hold fast to. They guard what man has said, not what God has said.

I mean, if you just think about it, too, not only were these men dishonoring God by holding fast to the wrong thing, human tradition rather than the Word of God, but it's just utter folly. It's a foolish thing to do. If you have options in front of you, you have the option of the Word of God or what man has said. Which one am I going to go with? Well, let's start to make a little comparison here. You have what man has said, temporary, good for a time, maybe; what God has said, eternal, everlasting; what man has said, weak, alright, barely motivating, barely inspiring at times if that; what God has said, living and active, powerful; what man has said, erroneous, fallible;

what God has said, perfect, true in every way. And you start to do this comparison and you think it's a no-brainer. And these Pharisees and these scribes, they knew what Moses had taught, but they also knew the rest of the Old Testament too, where you had, like, Psalm 19 and Psalm 119, and it talks about how important the Word of God is; and how necessary it is to cling to God's Word, to memorize, to hide it in your heart, to love it, to cherish it, to know it in and out, to meditate on it day and night. They knew that. These scribes and Pharisees, they knew that, and yet, what was their decision? ...the traditions of men. They spent their time devoted to understanding, practicing, and living out these traditions of men.

And that's why we have to have warnings even to this day because that continues to happen. We can still be allured away by human tradition. That's what Paul says. Right? In Colossians 2:8; "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition..." It will allure you "...according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." It's doable. It happens. It happens all the time, and we're all susceptible to it. We really are. Man can speak, and man can say things that sound great, and even in your mind as you think through it, the philosophy seems complex and potentially profound, but the reality is, if it's not according to Christ, then ditch it. It's terrible. It's human tradition, and you should not be taken captive by it. Instead, we are fine and sufficient with the Word of God. We have the Scriptures, and they are sufficient. We need nothing else. How do we know that? Because (2 Timothy 3:16-18), "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." You will not be lacking if you only commit yourself to this book. You will be lacking in no way. You will be mature. You will be complete. It is sufficient, what we have in Scripture alone.

Unfortunately, the scribes, the Pharisees, had abandoned that. They'd got caught up in the minutia, the details, of how to live this out and this fence around God's Law. This is what it'd become. So, Jesus confronts them, and He will continue to do so as we see in the rest of our text. In verses 9-13, we see this - the application of abandonment. He now highlights an example. He pulls up one example for them of how they're doing this. He gives an application. Not only does He call them out by quoting from Isaiah and then saying it bluntly as He does in verse 8, now He will continue to call them out

with this example. When we first see in verse 9, truth rejected - in verse 9, truth rejected. And what happens is there's kind of like an escalation of Jesus' argument. It is already started very strong, as He's quoted from Scripture, and He's straight-up told them, "You leave the commandment of God..." You abandoned it. Verse 9, and He said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!"

So, it's not enough just to say that they've abandoned and left the Word of God. Now, He has to say, well, let me just make sure you understand. It's not that you've, oh, you forgot what God's Word said; it's not just that. It's you've abandoned it, and you have rejected it. You've turned your back on it. It's a rejection that has taken place when it comes to God's Word, for your oral tradition and law that you are upholding. He says "You have a fine way..." This is the exact same word that He says for Isaiah in verse 6; "And he said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites...'" So, that word well, correct, right, successful, was Isaiah's prophecy of you. And in the same way in verse 9 He says correct, right, successful, is your rejection of "...the commandment of God..." in order to establish your tradition. Isaiah was successful in his prophecy, and they are successful in their hypocrisy, is what is taking place - ultimately rejected "...the commandment of God..." And He says "...in order to establish your tradition!" Establish, this word is the word that's used elsewhere for guarding and keeping, guarding and keeping the Word of God. They have made it their life's work to not just know it well and not just to put it up on a pedestal and tell other people, but to even guard it. In the same way that Jesus is guarding and protecting the actual, true Word of God, here they are guarding the commandments and the traditions of men.

So, what's the example? We find it in verses 10-12, and that is the tradition revealed - the tradition revealed. This example that comes, and this is a unique example that maybe isn't talked about often. But in verse 10, "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, 'Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban' (that is, given to God)— then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother..." It's a very odd and interesting example, but to begin with, notice that Jesus starts with, once again, the Word of God. He's already quoted from Isaiah, now He's quoting from Moses. Moses, the one who

authored the first five books, and what's more, the Ten Commandments. Something that a lot of people tend to know and hear about. And so, what Jesus does is He quotes from, not just Moses, but the Ten Commandments, the Fifth Commandment. Right? A very popular, understood, kind of unquestionable command of God to God's people; "Honor your father and your mother..." and then, He adds on to it another command that comes later in Exodus 21:17 as a follow up, the whole idea of if a man... "Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death." So, this severe command that's one of the Ten Commandments that even is worthy of the punishment of death if disobeyed. Jesus brings up clear scripture.

Verse 11 - He then addresses what they do with that; "But you..." So, we have what Moses said we have what God spoke through Moses, how about you guys. Verse 11; "But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God) then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother..." So, here we have this strange introduction of this thing called Corban, this word here. So, Corban is a Hebrew word, and it doesn't really get translated into Greek differently and then into English differently. That's just the Hebrew word. Corban, and that's how they leave it. So Corban, what is it? We're dealing with a word meaning given to God, that which is devoted or kind of set apart or given to God. It denotes money, goods, which've been dedicated to God by a vow which, as consecrated to God, could be used only for sacred purposes. So, there's these times in their life (as these Pharisees, these scribes), they view themselves as righteous and holy people. So, they had certain possessions and to show everyone how righteous they were, they would take certain things in their life and they would declare Corban on whatever that was. Right? This is my boat (not necessarily); I declare it as Corban. Right? This is no longer for everyone else to use; this is just for God. Alright? Here's my money; I declare it as Corban. Here's this food; I declare it as Corban. And whatever it was, it was now devoted for the sacred purpose of the temple and for God. It was no longer for themselves necessarily or for others.

Now this was a practice that had started to develop, and they started to use it as a loophole because, what happens when this whole idea of, you know, honoring your father and your mother? You think about that concept, and what happens is we all age, and as you age, parents get older, and as parents get older, they have needs again, and one of these very simple and basic

needs is just looking out for them, even financially assisting them if they need it in some way, some type of material possession maybe they might have, and you rise up as a child and you meet that need; so, you would think, if you're honoring your father and your mother. Well, the Pharisees and the scribes, they don't really like that. It's not fun to go, oh, I have to care for my parents now and give away my money again. Ahh! And so, they go aha! here's a loophole. We declare Corban on our money. We declare Corban on everything we have, and it is vowed to be for God. So, when their parents then have this need, they go I'm sorry, can't do anything. I vowed it to God. Hopefully, you figure it out. Right? Try someone else that didn't do this. Right? Try someone else that's not as holy or spiritual as me.

This was their practice, this spiritual practice of getting out of sticky situations. So, now, they could keep their money. They could actually hold on to these possessions while looking very spiritual in the midst of it because all these things are Corban, committed and devoted unto God. This is the practice that they have. So, rather than obeying the very heart of the Law that Jesus brings up, which is just honoring your parents, instead of doing that, they have this spiritual smoke screen. It helps them to avoid even helping their parents if they need to. So, once they made this vow of Corban, then they weren't permitted to do anything for their parents; and you start to just think about this on a very basic level, and it doesn't take long to realize, aw, this is backwards. That seems wrong. Right? That seems absolutely ridiculous; that we say, oh no, if I wouldn't have said that about my money, I could've helped you out mom and dad but, tsk, sorry. Right? It's just so backwards to what God upholds and wants as even seen in the Ten Commandments, very simple – simple.

I mean, it's even in our day right now. You can imagine how ridiculous this would look. As you have people in your growth group, people in your own family, maybe even your own parents or other family members, and they have need, and which of you is going to rise up and say, man, I wish I could help, but I already told God that, you know, all my money is for Him, so I can't really give it to other people. You think God is like, oh yeah, that's good. Thank you for that. Thanks for saying no to your brother and keeping it for Me. Right? These people need Brad Neal's financial stewardship class. Right? They need to understand that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof..." And so, it already belongs to Him, and He has a desire for how you use your resources, and the Law clearly shows over and over again this

horizontal nature of doing unto others in love. It's kind of a no brainer, but Jesus is exposing their heart that's far from God. Their lips, their words, they're fine. They're there. They look dead on. They sound like they're trying to be as detailed as possible in their obedience, but really, they've grieved God with their sin and their hearts that are far from Him.

So, from this, Jesus has to give a kind of tragic reversal that has taken place and give this devastating conclusion to what they're doing and this practice of it. In verse 13, in light of this practice that they're doing, He says, "...thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do." So, just think of how this's escalated. You start in verse 8 with you have left "...the commandment of God..." You have abandoned it. And then you go to verse 9. Actually, you've rejected it. You have actively rejected the Word of God. And now you have verse 13. In fact, your treatment of the Word of God and your upholding of tradition has now caused you to cancel the Word of God and undermine it completely. You're undermining the very thing that you say you uphold. You've completely reversed the very thing that you're saying that you're doing as God's leaders. And this example, their tradition of Corban, cancelled God's command to honor your father and mother. It's simple, but they didn't get it in this practical way.

It's also devastating to note that it's not just this example. In our text, the last thing that He says, "And many such things you do." Jesus knew how to deliver this perfect, stinging rebuke in order to protect the flock of God and confront this false living and teaching. This is just one example. This way of talking, this way of living, this way of acting, these loopholes that these experts in the Law knew, it abounded. There was so much of it. And Jesus says, "And many such things you do." It's tragic that this is what the Jewish people were enduring under this kind of leadership, this kind of corruption that was taking place. But it's not just that point in time. It's not just Isaiah's point in time where this takes place. This continues to take place.

Here we are in 2017. Five hundred years ago, even, five hundred years ago, of 1517, when we had the launch of the kind of the well-known historical event of the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther started to be one of many that started asking questions about what the Catholic church was doing at that time. He started to look around and say, huh, there's a high demand for money here. They're just trying to get everybody's money, and I see

these immaculate buildings going up, but I guess I'm giving money to send people into heaven? Is that what the Bible even teaches? And, wow, talk about the Bible; it's in a language that no one knows. And people don't even have their own copy of it. I mean, talk about corrupt. Luther starts looking round, and he writes out these ninety-five theses, and he publishes them and kind of launches, here, this reformation, this protest, against the corrupt church, the corrupt Roman Catholic church, that had what? ...elevated the teaching, the tradition, of men. They had gone so far off the track. They'd neglected the Word of God, twisted it and ignored it for the sake of their own ambitions and desires. So, Luther had to rise up, along with many others.

And we're thankful for that, but we realize that in our day, while we sit here in a church where the Word of God is, hopefully, taught now, and all across Sunday school classes and even mid-week in growth groups, we're thankful for that. Yet at the same time, we know that there is this competition; this competition of what we tell ourselves throughout the week; this competition of what we hear when we interact with other people, of what we listen to, of what we watch, of other things that we read. And don't get me wrong, I thank God for so many men who have written literature and books to help us understand the Bible better, but even in that, there is this layer of kind of secrecy. There's this layer that we need to be careful. We have to have discernment and search it out to make sure that it truly is the command of God, and we aren't arriving at some other conclusion over here because of what so-and-so said. We have to be discerning. We have to hold fast to the Word of God. If we believe that God's Word is sufficient, that all of the Scripture is breathed out by God, that it is profitable, and that it can make us adequate, complete, ready, for every good work, then we really need nothing else, and we can meditate upon this. We can trust this word that God has given us. We can saturate our minds in it, and we can speak of it when we talk with one another and encourage each other. This is the hope. This is the prayer for us as individuals and as a church, that we would not go down this path, that God would protect us from bad doctrine, and He would keep us holding fast to His Word and not what secular and human philosophy and human tradition might teach. Let's pray to that end.