

Date: September 13, 2026
Series: Mark: The Sovereign, Suffering Servant
Title: Truth Over Tradition
Text: Mark 7:1-23



INTRODUCTION

The Central Issue: What is it that makes a person defiled or unclean before God?
Where does our uncleanness come from? What is the source of it?

I. CLEAN HANDS, DIRTY HEARTS

Mark 7:1-5 -

1) The issue is NOT hygiene. The Pharisees and scribes are offended and troubled because Jesus' disciples are ignoring the oral tradition. According to the Pharisees' well-developed extrabiblical regulations, Jesus' disciples are considered defiled.

(Proverbs 30:5-6)

Note: The Pharisees taught and believed that, through strict obedience to the oral tradition, we could maintain our purity and protect ourselves from defilement.

Mark 7:6-8 -

2) External tradition and religious practice can conceal a heart filled with spiritual rot and deadly pollution.

(Philippians 3:8-11)

Note: It is precisely the heart that is not—and cannot be—fixed by the traditions of the elders.

Mark 7:9-13 -

3) Human tradition can become a convenient way to not only set aside but also undermine God's clearly revealed Word.

(Exodus 20:12; Exodus 21:17; Proverbs 30:17)

Note: The religious leaders had created a system whereby someone could neglect their parents, appear righteous before others, claim that their possessions belonged to God, and yet continue using those possessions for personal gain and profit.

(Mark 12:28-31)

Mark 7:14-19 -

4) Food does not stain our hearts! Our problem is that we were born with corrupted, rebellious, selfish, proud hearts that produce wicked thoughts, desires, and actions.

(James 1:14-15)

Mark 7:20-23 -

5) The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that we need a new heart, but—praise God—in Jesus we can be cleansed, changed, and receive a new heart!

(Ezekiel 36:25-27 and 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Questions for Further Study, Reflection, and Application...

1. Why were the Pharisees so offended in verses 1-5? What was at "the heart" of their complaint?
2. How does Jesus answer their question? Why does He quote from Isaiah 29?
3. What does Jesus have to say about the Pharisees' oral tradition? How would you summarize Jesus' words? What specific example does Jesus give?
4. Can you think of any examples from your own life where you've seen a commitment to some tradition or practice that either minimizes or undermines God's word?
5. Where does defilement and uncleanness really come from? How does Jesus address and fix this?