

September 6, 2020 James Gallaher Traditions Gone Wrong

Traditions, if different from our own, are sometimes judged by us - even in the church.

Mark 7:1-8 *The Pharisees and some of the scribes 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?" And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors 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.' Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."*

The Rabbi's voice was more important than the Scriptures – tradition was more important.

James 4:1 *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

Francis Chan asked churches the question, "What do people expect when they walk into your church? Which one would cause more disruption if not fulfilled? The answer among most churches is the things that serve the individual rather than the kingdom. We have our traditions and preferences. It wasn't wrong for the Pharisees to have traditions. The problem was when they elevated those traditions to the same level as scripture – an undue burden placed on people. The Pharisees were valuing traditions more than relationship with Jesus.

Psalm 50:21 *You thought that I was just like you.* The Pharisees couldn't see Jesus because Jesus didn't look like them. How many unbelievers today don't see Jesus because Christians don't look like Jesus? The Pharisees were very committed to finding Jesus - memorizing Scripture, following commands of the Old Testament, and living in physical denial so they would see the Messiah when we came. But then when Jesus didn't look like them, they missed Him. How often do we miss Jesus because He doesn't look like us or doesn't do what we want?

Verse 8 *Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.* We want Jesus to look like us so much that we hold people to the same standards that we have. We put burdens on other's sins more than and instead of our own. The goal was never that Jesus would look like us but that we would look like Jesus.

The Pharisee's understanding was not based on a relationship with the Father but was based on information about the Father. They knew the law but not His heart. Relationship with Jesus is important so that we can hear what He is saying to us.

James 2:19 *...the demons also believe, and shudder.* Too often we stop at belief and don't develop the relationship. Jesus brings us to relationship instead of tradition.

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The Pharisee's greatest failure was that they never understood Jesus because they never got to know Jesus. Our only hope in this world is to know Jesus better. In order to become who God wants us to be, we have to know Jesus better. It's not about rights and wrongs. The more we know Him, the more we become like Him. Is obedience to His Word a struggle? It's not about trying harder but about knowing Him more.

Do we use Jesus' Words to abuse people around us? Well-intentioned Christians can actually wound others by taking Jesus' Words out of context. A visible example is the story of Zaccheus in Luke 19. Can you hear the compassion instead of an angry command in Jesus' call to Zaccheus? Jesus provided salvation and changed him.

Matthew 12:34 *For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.* What is filling our hearts? We can know by the words that come out of our mouths. Is it doubt? shame? disappointment? condemnation? fear? pain? The way we talk about Jesus and His commands say a lot about our relationship and our heart. Examine our words.

The promise is that Jesus came to take away the striving and replace it with His goodness and mercy. The success of the church is not based on adherence to traditions but based on people who look a whole lot like Jesus. The method is that we would love the world like Jesus and value Him more than our traditions. Stand for what is true rather than argue about our desires; put aside differences in favor of His great love. We need to become people who look like Jesus instead of like our traditions.

What does it look like? Being gracious, compassionate, kind, and laying down our lives for one another so that the world would see Jesus. Let's put aside our traditions in favor of His love.

No more striving.

Rest in His presence.

Allow the grace of God to come and fall upon our lives.

How have you ever judged another's tradition?

How have you replaced one of your own traditions with compassion to look more like Jesus?

Have you ever been so focused on finding Jesus that you missed Him?

How do we seek to be in a relationship with Jesus rather than just knowing about Jesus?