

God is not an Excuse

Message 30

Mark Series

6.30.18

Mark 7:8–13 (NIV)

⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

⁹ And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ ¹¹ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—¹² then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. ¹³ Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

1. Have you noticed that Christians have their own language?

A. We have all of these phrases that we use especially after we have been in the Church for a while.

1. For example: Praying a hedge of protection.
2. Bless your heart.
3. My favorite: Let me pray about it.

B. Many times we use the Lord as an excuse to not do what we don't want to do.

1. Or we use the name of the Lord to add extra “force” to the argument.
2. For example: “I really feel like the Lord wants me to...”

3. Sometimes it really is from the Lord and, if so, you need to be obedient.

4. But don't say you will pray about it if you aren't going to pray, and don't say it's from the Lord if the real reason is you don't want to.

C. If you are guilty of doing these things, don't feel too bad.

1. The religious people of Jesus' day did it too.

2. In fact, they had developed an intricate system that allowed people to do what they wanted in the name of service to God.

3. The problem was what they wanted was contrary to the clear understanding of the Word of God.

D. Every passage we read speaks to us differently.

1. I really struggled with today's message, trying to figure out what the Lord wanted to say, first to me and then to you.

2. And after a week of struggling with this passage, here is what the Lord is trying to teach me:

3. He wanted to know what my motive is behind what I do.

a. My situation is unique.

b. My life isn't divided up into family, job, and church.

c. Because this church is my family, my job, and my church.

d. And someday, behind the surface, my attitude stinks.

e. I may be giving to the Lord, but my reasons are wrong.

4. It is a privilege to GIVE to the Lord.

5. Our attitude determines whether we are blessed by that giving or cursed by it.

6. This morning, we find the Pharisees encouraging people to dedicate and give to the Lord, but the motives were wrong.

7. Let's dig into this passage, and will you allow the Holy Spirit to make this message personal just like He made it personal to me?

2. The Lord has given us rules and guidelines to live by.

A. The most basic of these rules are the Ten Commandments.

1. When God spoke these Commandments to Israel, it served as the structure and framework of how to please God.

2. Have no other Gods.

a. Do not kill or murder.

b. Don't commit adultery.

c. Honor your parents.

3. These Commands provided a framework to live by.

B. But these Commands can be summed up.

1. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, and soul.

2. Love your neighbor as yourself.

3. In my life, this is much harder to do.

a. I don't have a problem not murdering someone.

b. I do have a problem loving some people.

4. The outward expressions of obedience to God's commands are easier to fulfill than the inward expressions.

a. This is what makes religion so tempting.

b. To set up a set of rules and laws that, if kept, declare you to be good.

c. When these rules are broken you are punished.

5. My biggest struggle is not with what I do but what I think.

a. This was the area Jesus was dealing with.

- b. He was tired of human traditions that masked the true thoughts and motives behind the action.
- c. Jesus used the tradition of Corban to show exactly what He meant.

3. What was Corban?

A. *Qorban* is a technical term within the priestly tradition of the OT (its use is limited to Lev., Num. and Ezek.) where it always denotes an offering made to God.¹

1. Corban is something given to God.
2. Corban is a good thing.
 - a. It is good to give a sacrifice or offering to God.
 - b. It is good to go above and beyond and give generously to the Lord of your time, talents, or treasures.
3. A month ago, I watched this congregation give to the Lord in a powerful and generous way.
 - a. I watched as people sacrificially and generously declared guitars, paychecks, vehicles, and tax refunds Corban to the Lord.
 - b. I watched as people declared they would give finances to the Lord, and then the next week bring in the offerings in a reverential manner.
 - c. What you all did was a true expression of Corban, and it pleases the Lord.

B. What the people in Jesus' day were doing did not please to the Lord. (2 Reasons)

- 1. First reason:** you cannot declare something to be an offering when it already belongs to the Lord.

¹ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 250.

a. Let me use tithing as an example.

1. Scripture teaches that the first ten percent belongs to the Lord.

2. When Julie and I tithe, we are not giving an offering or going above and beyond: We are giving back to the Lord what is already His.

3. That means we don't give to the building fund out of our tithe.

4. We don't help send kids to camp or pay medical bills out of our tithe.

5. It belongs to the Lord.

b. Corban was meant to dedicate something beyond the tithe to the Lord as an offering and sacrifice.

c. To give in this manner is to say, "I could use this for something less noble but I will give it to the Lord."

2. Second reason: People were declaring Corban on things that belonged to someone else.

a. For example: A son had the responsibility of taking care of his parents later in life.

1. Perhaps this young man said that someday, when he sold Freddy the Ox, he would give that money to the Lord. (Corban)

2. About the time he was ready to sell, his parents got sick and they needed money to pay the bills.

3. The tradition of the Elders said that he could not give that money to help take care of his parents because he declared it to be Corban.

b. The other possibility is that the son didn't want to take care of his parents.

1. So instead of selling Freddy the Ox to help take care of his parents, which is the honorable thing to do, the man says "I can't because I think I am going to give it to the Lord instead".

2. In both examples the result is the same: the parents that the son was to honor go without honor and uncared for.

4. This manipulation of God's law brought out Jesus' anger.

A. God never intended for us to make Him our excuse.

1. God was getting the blame for the people breaking His law.
2. They had completely missed the point and purpose of the law:
 - a. To love God with all of their being AND
 - b. To love their neighbor as themselves.
 - c. To love God and to love your neighbor are not at odds with each other, they complement each other.

B. Jesus told the religious people that they "nullify the word of God by your traditions".

1. God intended the Law and commandments to benefit men.
2. It was a good thing to follow God's law.
3. But men manipulated the law in such a way that God's original intent was lost.
4. God intended the honoring of our fathers and mothers to be a good thing.
5. This tradition of the Pharisees made it a curse.

C. When we elevate our teaching above the Word of God we turn blessings into curses.

1. God's Word is a blessing.
 - a. I cannot improve upon the Word of God.

- b. That is why I try to stay as close to Scripture as I can.
- 2. It is when we start adding personal interpretation and personality to the Word that we end up with all kind of craziness.
 - a. When churches and Christians get away from Scripture and start adding their own stuff, we find that we nullify God's Word.
 - b. We, in essence, rob it of its authority and power to transform lives.
 - c. The Pharisees did this and received the rebuke of Jesus.
- D. Today, Jesus is getting blamed for all kinds of things that He didn't tell us to say or do.
 - 1. It is ok to have opinions.
 - 2. It is not ok to add, "Thus sayeth the Lord" to your opinion.

5. How can we apply this message? (Key thoughts)

#1. You can't obey God in one part of your life by disobeying Him in another.

A. Let me give you some extreme examples:

- 1. The Lord won't tell you to leave your current spouse in order to marry someone else.
- 2. The Lord won't tell you to cheat on your taxes so you can give more to the church.
- 3. The Lord won't tell you to burn down an abortion clinic to protest abortion.

B. **If you are disobedient in one area of your life, you are disobedient in every area.**

- 1. Disobedience is just another name for sin.
- 2. You can't be sinning in one part of your life and it not affect the rest of you.

- a. If you are sinning in the area of lust, it is affecting all of your life.
 - b. If you are cheating in one area, you are cheating in other areas too.
3. The Pharisees obeyed God in many ways.
- a. But they were wrong with many of their traditions, and the Lord called them out about it.
 - b. You weren't created to live a life of hypocrisy, showing one mask to the world and one mask to yourself.
 - c. If you are willfully being disobedient in an area in your life, it is time for you to bring that to Jesus so He can forgive and change you.

#2. You can be religious and still be far from God.

A. We live in a very religious country.

1. Let me give you an example:

2. In 2013, Matthew McConaughey won an academy award for "Dallas Buyers Clubs".

3. Here is part of his speech:

"Now, first off, I want to thank God. 'Cause that's who I look up to. He has graced my life with opportunities that I know are not of my hand or any other human hand. He has shown me that it's a scientific fact that gratitude reciprocates. In the words of the late Charlie Laughton, who said, "When you've got God, you got a friend. And that friend is you."

4. What's the problem with this?

a. According to Parentsreviewⁱ, the movie contained:

b. "Frequent portrayals of sexual activity with some breast nudity and detail."

c. "200 instances of coarse language"

d. "Detailed portrayals of drug use involving cocaine".

B. We live in a culture where we can praise God one minute and celebrate nudity, drug use, and other sins the next minute.

1. We, as a nation, have the appearance of godliness and yet deny the power thereof.

2. It is very possible to be religious and still be far from God.

C. As believers, we have to make sure we aren't wearing the mask of hypocrisy.

1. Our world needs the genuine Jesus, not some modern caricature.

2. The world will never experience the genuine Jesus through human traditions, but through the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrated through the lives of genuine believers.

#3. Ministry should be neither a burden nor an excuse.

A. The Pharisees had made ministry both a burden and an excuse for others.

1. Too often, the work I do for the Lord comes with too much attitude.

2. I remember growing up that it wasn't enough for me to do my chores, I had to do them with the right attitude.

3. Because my attitude controlled my mouth, and my mouth would say things that I didn't need to say.

4. It is possible to be outwardly obedient and inwardly rebellious.

B. It is good to give to the Lord and to serve the Lord.

1. But if or when you notice your attitude getting out wack, check yourself.

2. Pull back and ask, "where is this coming from?"

a. Are you tired?

b. Are you serving in an area that isn't for you?

c. Do you just have a bad attitude and need to grow through this?

3. We all know that the right attitude makes all the difference in life.

4. To serve the Lord should be joy and when it isn't it is good to step back and make sure you are following Jesus and what He has called you to do and not some tradition or humanly obligation.

May the Lord be merciful to us, forgive us of our wrong attitudes, and change us into His image.

Let us Pray.

ⁱ <http://parentpreviews.com/movie-reviews/dallas-buyers-club>