

March 30

Scriptures: Read Mark 7

Key Verse: "... Laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men..."
(Mark 7:8)

Overview

If ever you're tempted to reduce God's work in your life to a system of formula, read this chapter. In the first half we read about Jesus' revulsion for human systems and traditions. Specifically, He attacks formulas for righteousness. The issue was what is, and what isn't "kosher" (or "clean"). The Pharisees were upset because Jesus' disciples were eating food without washing their hands beforehand.

Jesus reacts by quoting Isaiah 29:13 where the Lord speaks out against external lip service and the teachings of men. Then He knocks the tradition of neglecting one's parent's financial needs by designating their rightful portion "corban" (a gift devoted to God). And then He offends religious tradition even more by saying that what we eat or drink has nothing to do with defilement. Rather it's the internals of man that defile him. Uncleanness is not an "outside" issue at all – it's an "inside" one. So chuck the man-made rules. God looks where no other person can look: on the heart. Then, just in case you think you can get Jesus to do what you want if you're clever enough to discover His healing and miracle-working formula, read on.

In the latter half of the chapter, we see Jesus healing a woman's demon-possessed daughter, not with a touch, or a command, but by a semitic riddle-like interchange, a clever answer and a quiet word. Then while you're still trying to figure that one out, He goes on to heal a deaf and partially dumb man by doing seven things: He (1) takes the man aside. (2) touches the man's ears. (3) spits. (4) touches the man's tongue. (5) looks up to heaven. (6) sighs and (7) shouts, "Be opened!".

So where's the system? The formula? There is none. Ultimately we're all subject to God's sovereignty. He won't be labeled, figured out, or put in a box. Which, among other things, makes prayer quite an adventure!

Prayer

We pray today, oh God, that we will never be guilty of trying to manipulate Your divine workings in our life by using a formula or system. We know You are sovereign.