

## Mark 7:1-37

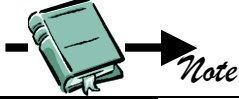
### All for show

Share some family traditions or customs that have been established, but now you may have no idea of how they originated!  
To do with birthdays, Christmas, meal times, holidays or anything...

Read Mark 7:1-37

### All for show: The Setting: v1-4

*Narrative*



Why would Pharisees and teachers of the law come all the way from Jerusalem? What happened last time they came (see 3:20-30)? Have a look at the Mark 1-7 Summary Sheet: Jesus and the religious leaders.

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Over centuries the Pharisees and scribes had amassed hundreds of rules and regulations in order to 'hedge in the law'. Their intention was to make sure that none of the 613 Old Testament laws were broken accidentally – and to also ensure that the law applied to new situations, which had arisen since the law was given. The regulations in Mark 7:3-4 were an example of these extra 'laws'. Through them, the good motive of ensuring that God's people were not unclean (and unfit for a relationship with him) had been clouded by a vast tradition of petty rules.<sup>1</sup>

It is the distinction between God's law and the Pharisees' rules that Jesus emphasizes. In verses 1-5, how does Mark emphasise this distinction?

The regulations in question were to do with ceremonial washing. What was the intended purpose of such a tradition (see Ex 30:19 40:12)? How had the Pharisees added to the law?

### All for show: The question: v5

Put the question in your own words:

What may be a contemporary expression of such a question?

### All for show: Jesus' response: v9-15

From verses 9-13, list all the things that Jesus calls the Pharisees and what he says they do (don't worry about understanding the case example in v10-12 for now).

V6:

V6:

V7:

V7:

V8:

V9:

V13:

V13:

Read over and take-in this list. Why is Jesus so vehement, so condemning?

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A hypocrite was a Greek actor who played parts on a stage using different masks – they were literally two faced!  
How was the Pharisees hypocrisy expressed?

The heart of the Pharisees' problem is the diagnosis in verses 8-9. How may such a problem be expressed in our own church?

Prayer

- ✓ Pray that we would have the wisdom to identify when this is happening
- ✓ and the humility and love to repent of it when it does.

<sup>1</sup> See PTC, NT1 notes p67-68 for more.

## All for show: Jesus' example: v10-12

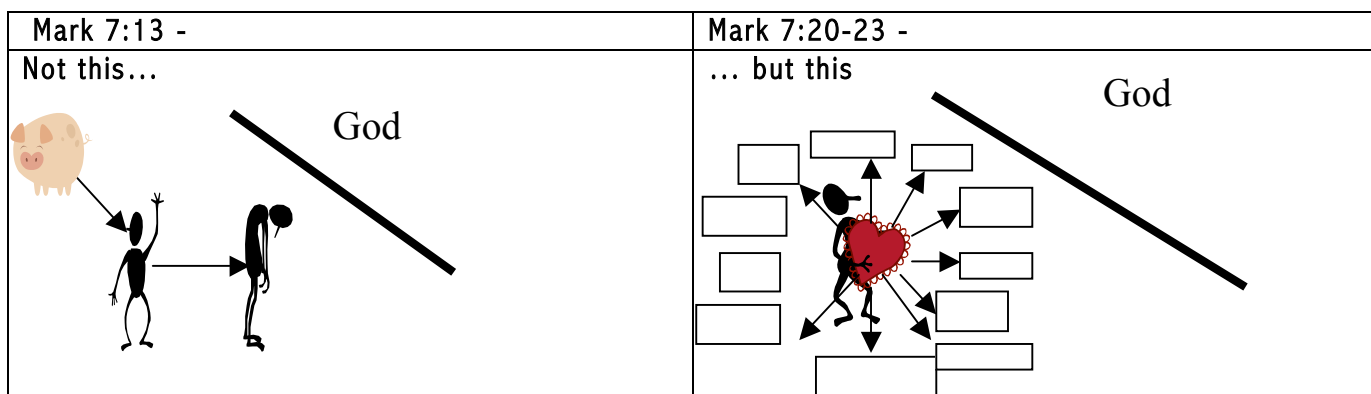
Jesus gives an example of how the hypocrisy of the Pharisees works itself out. The example Jesus gave (Corban) was something people would do to avoid having to provide for their parents. Under one of the religious leaders' rules if you dedicated your house to God (this is what Corban means) you weren't allowed to offer it to someone else – even your parents if they needed somewhere to stay.

- What is the motivation behind the people doing this?
- What commandments of God are they breaking?
- How is it hypocritical?
- What does Isaiah 29:13-16 say will happen to such people?

## All for show: Jesus' parable: v14-23

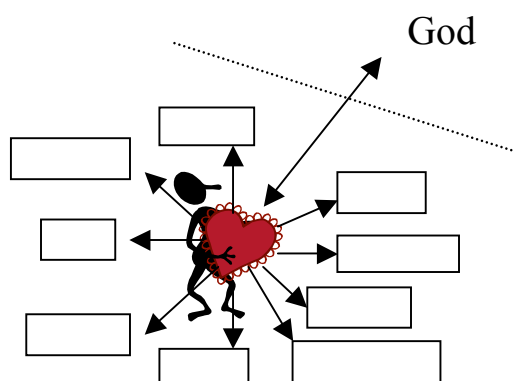
This one sentence parable (v15) turns the whole Pharisaic understanding of clean and unclean upside down. It may seem clear to us, but the disciples didn't understand it (v17) when it was first given. As per the parables in Chapter 4, Jesus only explains it in private.

Fill in the diagrams below, writing the relevant verses in the boxes. The big dark line represents a barrier between the man and God.



If this is the case then, how could someone become clean?

To become truly clean, we need God's heart surgery, then our heart will stop polluting us. Fill out the diagram below, using Galatians 5:22-25. Note what's happened to the barrier between the man and God.



*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Gal 6:22-25)*

Bonus question: where is verse 16 in Mark 7? (clue, see the NIV footnote)

## All for show: The faith of an 'unclean' woman: v14-23

Jesus' teaching about what truly makes someone clean or unclean is now put into practice as he meets two people who would have been viewed traditionally as 'unclean' because they are both Gentiles.

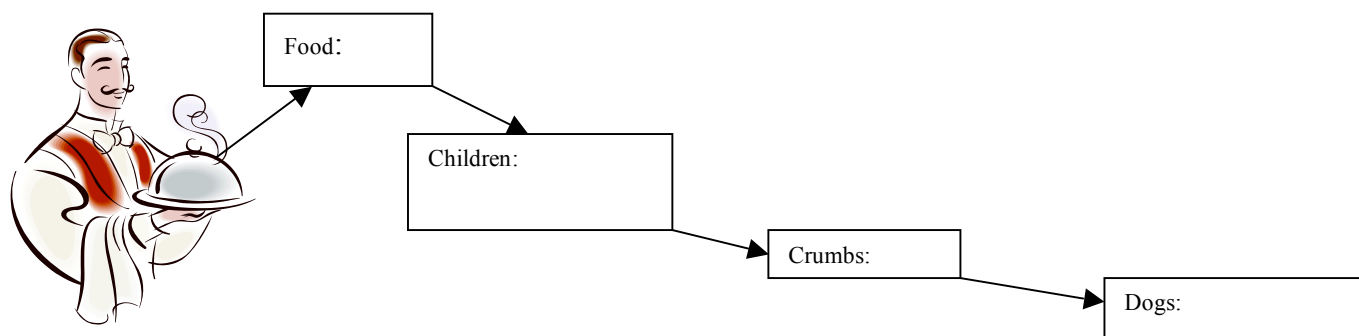
**Setting:** trace on a map where Jesus now goes. He is at the extremities of traditional Israel. Upon entering the house Jesus is unable to keep his presence a secret. Read and briefly discuss 'Jesus and the Messianic secret' from the Summary Sheet.

**The woman:** The significance of this whole story turns on the woman's nationality. Where is she from?

This is the second Gentile that Jesus has interacted with in Mark, who was the other?

What is her plight? Who has had a similar plight?

Interpret verses 27-28 to complete the diagram below:



As God's children, the Jews were to be 'fed' the good news about the Messiah first of all. What has been the characteristic response to Jesus from the Jewish leaders? From the Jewish crowds? From his home town?

What has this woman displayed that most Jews have not? What is her reward?

Where do we fit in the diagram above?

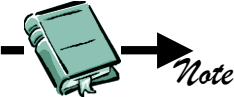
This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> story of a demon being cast out by Jesus, not to mention the other occasions that are just summarised. If you have time read the Summary 'Jesus and demon possession'.

### Prayer

- ✓ Thank God that he allows non-Jews to receive such a message. And be fed the food prepared for the children...

## All for show: The healing of an 'unclean' man v31-37

**The journey:** Trace on a map where Jesus goes.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Narrative</i></p>  <p><i>Note</i></p> | <p>This is Jesus' second venture into Gentile territory. What were Jesus last words in the Decapolis? (see Mark 5:19)</p> <p>What had obviously happened since he had last been there? What was the result?</p> |
|--|---|

**The healing:** Why would Jesus take the sick man away from the crowds? (you may want to have a quick scan of the Summary 'Jesus and the crowds', and 'Jesus and healing')

Discuss the varieties of methods that Jesus has used to heal people so far. How the method he uses here, appropriate to the situation?

#### Old Testament context

**The result:** Summary: v36-37

News about Jesus was by now uncontrollable because of the sheer amazement of what was happening. **Read Isaiah 35:3-6**, what is the significance of deaf hearing and mute sneaking?

#### All for show: **Relevance**

What temptations do we face to place human teaching above God's word?

How can we guard against this?

How can we guard against defiling ourselves by what comes out of our hearts?

What particular attitudes, emotions or desires do you need to work on?

#### Prayer

- ✓ Ask God to perform his radical heart surgery, so that you are not polluted by what comes out of your heart
- ✓ Thank God that he included non-Jews in his plan of salvation
- ✓ Thank God for Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees and his exposing of their hypocrisy
- ✓ Ask God to guard us against similar hypocrisy

# Summary Mark 1-7

## Jesus and religious authority

In chapter 1 Jesus is introduced as one who teaches with authority, it is in comparison to the local scribes who do not teach with authority (1:22).

Across Chapters 2-3 there are 5 conflict episodes back to back. These are conflicts Jesus has with **local authorities**. The intensity increases to the point of premeditated murder:

- Accusation of blasphemy (2:1-12)
- Grumbling over association with sinners (2:13-17)
- Questions about not fasting (2:18-22)
- Challenges over the Sabbath (2:23-27)
- Trap and plot to kill (3:1-6)
  - By this stage the Jewish politicians (Herodians) have also joined forces with the Pharisees against Jesus
    - The Pharisees fear a dismantling of their religious system
    - The Herodians fear the crowds look like a Jewish uprising

In chapter 3:22-30 Pharisees travel **all the way from Jerusalem**. These are the big guns. Their accusation is that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebub.

In 5:21-43 a local religious authority, Jairus, breaks the mould and comes to Jesus in faith for the healing of his daughter. As the synagogue ruler in Capernaum(?), he probably heard and saw Jesus many times before he came to him.

In 7:1-23, it is the Pharisees from **Jerusalem** again who question Jesus.

## Jesus and teaching

Jesus came to teach (1:38), and this is a priority over healing and even casting out demons.

Jesus' first words in the Gospel are his preaching, 'the time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news' (1:14-15). In chapter 4 we get the fullest account of Jesus' teaching, which are the 5 kingdom parables.

Jesus' teaching is authoritative and far out-strips the teaching of the local scribes and Pharisees (1:27). Could it be that in hearing Jesus it was as though God himself was speaking, yet when the local teachers taught it was obvious they spoke the word of men? Because of his authoritative teaching, religious rulers often debated him and crowds flocked to hear Jesus. Yet, Jesus taught in different ways for different audiences. For the outsiders he teaches in parables, for the insiders he makes everything clear (4:10-12).

As part of Jesus' teaching/preaching is his teaching about forgiveness (2:1-12), thus he assaults Satan's kingdom through releasing those bound in sin.

## Jesus and healings

Right from chapter 1 Jesus has healed many people. He has not met a disease that he has not had power over.

However, while healings establish Jesus authority and show the dawn of the Messianic kingdom, they are not the primary reason Jesus came, when crowds flock to him for healing, he says, 'let us go somewhere else – to nearby villages so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' (1:38)

Healings are one way that Jesus assaults the kingdom of Satan, but in the hierarchy of preaching, casting out demons and healings – they come in third.

Healings are sometimes referred to in **theological** terms, eg, 'your faith has healed you' (5:34)

Healings in Mark 1-7

- Peter's mother in law
- Many with various diseases in Capernaum
- A leper
- A paralytic
- A man with a withered hand
- Many by the lake of Galilee
- The sick woman
- Jairus' daughter raised from the dead
- The deaf and almost mute man

## Jesus and the Old Testament

The Old Testament is used to introduce Jesus as **the Lord**, finally visiting his people (1:2-3)

Old Testament quotations at Jesus' baptism declare him to be **the Messiah** and the **Suffering Servant**

With the Old Testament as the background, Jesus repeatedly puts himself in God's position as the bridge-groom of Israel and the Lord of the Sabbath (Ch 3).

In chapter 6, he acted like **Moses** in leading the people into the desert, he also acted like **Joshua** as the shepherd of God's people and, in the biggest way, acted like **God himself** in providing food from Heaven. When Jesus walks on water he uses God's words from Exodus to identify himself, 'It is I' is literally, 'I am'.

In Chapter 7, Jesus uses the Old Testament **against** the Pharisees to show their divergence from it – this is in contrast to Jesus' manifest fulfillment of the Old Testament!

It would be a very useful exercise to trace all of these Old Testament references, most NIV Bibles will point you in the right direction!

## Jesus and demon possession

As part of Jesus' assault on the kingdom of Satan, he casts out many demons. Demons recognize who Jesus is, they recognize his authority over them and his authority and power to destroy him (1:24-25, 5:6-10).

In summaries of what Jesus was doing, casting out demons is often paired with preaching (1:21-27, 39, also 3:13-14). This is because together, they represent the twin assault on Satan's kingdom. Interestingly healings are not always mentioned here (aside from 3:7-12, where just healings and casting out demons are mentioned, although this seems to be part of the negative portrayal of this crowd – ie Jesus didn't teach them).

Jesus uses the power of the Holy Spirit to cast out demons, contrary to the accusation that he used the power of the most powerful demon – Beelzebub (3:20-30). Ironically the demons themselves who are cast out are under no illusions as to what power Jesus used!

## Jesus and the Messianic secret.

Jesus often didn't want people to know who he was or what he did. He especially ordered evil spirits to keep quiet about his identity (1:25, 34, 3:12).

Jesus' secrecy:

- Evil spirits ordered to be quiet (1:25)
- Demons ordered not to speak (1:34)
- Healed leper ordered not to tell anyone (1:44)
- Evil spirits ordered to be quiet (3:12)
- Jesus teaches to confuse crowds (4:10-12)
- Jairus ordered not to tell anyone that his daughter had been raised to life (5:43)
- Crowds told not to tell about the deaf and almost mute man being healed (7:36)

Why would Jesus do this? It seems that Jesus did not want to fuel 'Messianic fires'. At this stage the people did not have a full understanding of what Jesus came to do. Not only was he the Messiah – God's eternal king who would rule with peace and justice, putting all of God's enemies down – he was also the Suffering Servant (the voice from Heaven puts these two together in 1:10). The people didn't realize the second part of this. Thus, if they identified Jesus as the Messiah, they would expect him to march on Jerusalem and free Israel from Roman occupation. In John 6, the crowds try to make Jesus king by force after he feeds the 5000.

It seems that Jesus also doesn't want to be tempted to be this kind of king (part of the devil's temptations in the desert was for Jesus to become king without having to suffer first). Thus, the only time Jesus openly identifies himself as the Christ, without telling people to be quiet, is when he is on trial. By this stage his suffering and death are in motion...

The only exception in Mark 1-7 is the man possessed by Legion. He is told to spread the news far and wide. This is probably because he is in a Gentile area, free from Messianic expectations and because Jesus won't be returning to this area for a while. When Jesus leaves here the first time, the crowds are against him, when he returns the man has done such a good job that people recognise him and now bring their sick to him (7:31-32).

## Jesus and crowds

Crowds do not get a good wrap in the early chapters of Mark.

- Crowds clamor for healing (1:33-34)
- Crowds prevent Jesus from teaching (1:38)
- Crowds prevent Jesus from moving openly (1:45)
- Crowds prevent a paralytic from getting to Jesus (2:4)
- Crowds almost crush Jesus (3:7)
- Jesus calls 12 out of the crowds to be his apostles (3:13-19)
- Crowds prevent Jesus from eating (3:20)
- Crowds gather around the lake to hear Jesus teach (4:1)
- Jesus teaches in parables in order to confuse the crowd (4:10-12)
- Jesus leaves the crowds to get some rest (4:36)
- crowds gather when Jairus comes (5:21)
- crowds hide the sick woman (5:30)
- crowds prevent Jesus' disciples from eating (6:31)
- Jesus moves away from the crowds to healing the deaf and almost mute man (7:33)

Crowds are often amazed at what Jesus did, but its individuals who step out of crowds that Mark chooses to focus on in their acts of faith. The crowds are often healing obsessed.