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## **All Lips and No Heart**

Mark 7:1-23

Perfection, rules of holiness, pride, better than thou attitudes. Image is everything thinking. Their C -Cope meetings make a parody of the church. Sadly to say this is all too often characterized by the church. The world let us know on Saturday Night Live how goofy they view Christians in those "church lady" skits. The humor was funny because it exaggerates and amplifies some truth. The church lady was overly concerned with the rules of tradition and showed little heart for God or His commandments. Appearing pious in one scene and slandering a neighbor in the next. The world is quick to expose hypocrisy. It's the number one complaint of those outside the church looking in. It's the number one reason given why they aren't here. Are most of us believers desperately trying to avoid being exposed for the fake we know we really are inside. Do we really have an inability to be genuine and real before God and authentic around our neighbors. Or, Are we falsely accused of this two faced thinking?

As reported by the Associated Press last spring, one poll asked respondents to rank the relative importance of various concerns, with the following results: 40 percent said faith in God was the most important thing in their lives....What's wrong with this figure?...If religion is the most important, then shouldn't it should make a profound difference in the area we supposedly care about so little—our jobs. Is that the case? The Princeton Religion Research Center has measured the impact of religion on day-to-day work. Comparing the "churched" with the "unchurched" on a wide range of behaviors like pilfering supplies (stealing), overstating qualifications on resumes (lying), calling in sick when not sick (lying and stealing), and overstating tax deductions (lying, stealing, and cheating), the center finds "little difference in the ethical views and behavior of the churched and the unchurched." The differences seen "are of marginal significance."

If faith in God makes no difference in how we spend our money, how we use our time, how we behave on the job, then how important can it really be?

Maybe us here at this church could have increased those percentages in the poll? Does that mean faith in God is the most important thing in my life? I'd like to think so, but sometimes I'm not so sure. Sometimes when I look in the mirror I have to ask: What's wrong with this picture? Why am I sometimes more concerned with appearing to be righteous than actually fostering a heart for God? Why do the words that flow from my lips sometimes mask the sinful attitudes and thoughts in my heart? I don't want to be that way. My desire is to embrace God with my whole heart. How can we begin to expose our empty words, deal with them in an authentic way and foster a heartbeat for God? How can I have less lip and more heart?

Turn with me in your Bibles to Mark 7. We will read verses 1-23. (READ) The conflict of Jesus with the religious leaders of the day returns to Mark's gospel narrative. Remember back in chapter three that last we heard of the Pharisees they were not pleased with Jesus. They complained he was defiling or polluting himself by eating with sinners and gentiles. They were peeved at him for working on the Sabbath, healing folks and failing to toe the line of their rules. They felt threatened by His authority and Words. Verse 6 in chapter three they began to plot how to destroy Jesus. Well...here in chapter 7 "They're baaaack!" The Pharisee and some scribes go up to Capernaum looking for an opportunity to expose Jesus as a fake and false prophet..However, they will be the ones who return feeling quite naked with the exposure Jesus lays on their motives.

The religious leaders confront Jesus about his disciples blatant disregard of the ceremonial washings prior to eating of bread. In verse 4 Mark explains to his Roman readers that the custom of the Jews was to wash after they return from the market place. It would have been impossible for them to shop without coming in contact with a Gentile. Any pot that was purchased at the market, was to be ceremonially boiled prior to use. Should a pitcher become unclean it was to be broken. Bread eaten with unwashed hands was viewed as if garbage were being consumed. Any Rabbi or teacher who disregarded the washings after

Gentile contact was found guilty of a great defilement and excommunicated. The ceremonial washing was a big deal in Jesus day. It was one of the few things that both the Hillell and Shamai schools of religion could agree was necessary. Verse three this was the common practice of all the Jews to keep clean. These were people who had a holy covenant with God. They determined in order to maintain their holiness, they needed to avoid contamination from other pagan gentiles. The purpose was to keep them distinct and separate. So when they came home from the store, they would wash their hands all the way to the elbows, holding their arms up in the air so that, no dirty water would run back down and re-pollute their hands. These folks were almost paranoid about washing their hands. Washing was a good thing for sanitary thing to do, but it drove a wall between them and the other peoples of the world. Jesus came to earth to break down the walls that divided people from God. Washing the hands kept the outside looking clean, but we will find out it's much easier to have clean hands than a pure heart.

How can we have less lip and more heart? Point number 1. Be real..people are watching. The Pharisees come to Jesus and ask Him why the disciples were not following the man made oral traditions of their fathers?

The Pharisees looked at the disciples actions and turned to Jesus holding Him responsible for their actions. Do you think that was fair? It appears that Jesus wasn't caught eating without washing, yet His disciples actions reflected poorly on the teacher in the sight of the Pharisees. They looked at the disciples and held Jesus responsible.

Jesus is no longer physically present on here on earth, (though I did have someone come in my office this week claiming to be Him) The language He used was not congruent with speech Jesus probably would have used so I think we can rule him out. But, since Jesus is not here, how has He chosen to make his presence known to people on the earth? Through His disciples, through those people who claim His name. Personally, I think that strategy is a bit risky. I would not want my character and name be based on the actions of another. But, that's the way Jesus has chosen to reveal himself to others. People who know you are a Christian are watching you. They are looking to see if the Jesus they see in you is genuine, is worth embracing. When they see garbage

in us, hypocrisy in us, it hurts the name of Christ. They look at our mess ups and say, "if that's what your Jesus is all about I don't want any part of it." Don't get me wrong, we all mess up we can't reach perfection this side of heaven, we who are sick with sin need to be going to a hospital, we are in the right place, but lets get real. Lets stop pumping ourselves up to be more pious then we really are. When we lose our authenticity, we then lose our audience. Nothing is more unattractive than a fake. Point number one Be real...people are watching.

How can we begin to have less lip and more heart? Point number two. Holiness is not obtained by keeping a list of dos and don'ts. The Pharisees thought if everything looked clean and shinny on the outside of their lives, they were guaranteed pure hearts on the inside. They avoided doing these certain activities and made sure they were doing these other list of things, that would ensure a righteous standing before God. They kept a list. A long list of does and don't. We tend to categorize sin don't we. We tend to have a list of sins that are unacceptable and other ones that are possibly tolerable. We tend to create a list that is easy for us to keep, and enforce that list on those who may struggle in those areas where were strong. The culture of the Pharisees ranked some sins as worse than others. Holiness was dependent on keeping the rules that they made up. But we all know that it's easier to have clean hands than a pure heart. Everyone in the room here could easily tell if my hands were dirty, but it's pretty tough to tell if my heart is defiled, polluted and in need of confession and cleanup. Sometimes my lips say one thing and my heart thinks another. Do you ever struggle with that? Jesus wants more than just words from our lips, He wants a heartbeat that is in tune with Him. To do that we first must 1) Be real...people are watching 2) Don't think that keeping a list will make you holy.

Jesus is one who saw to the heart of things. He had a way of tearing off the mask to reveal the true motive. Look at His reply in verse 6. He quotes from Isaiah 29. You folks are all lip and no heart. Your worship is mere words, it's sentences with only consonants and vowels, meaningless, vain worship. You say the right words but because your heart is not in it. Your praises travel only as far as the ceiling. You have neglected God's standard for holiness in order to uphold the rules you have decided will define holiness.

Point number 3. You want more heart for God and less lip? Than we must stop legitimizing selfishness with whitewashed piety. Stop spreading a religious glaze over our own selfishness and greed. In verse 10 Jesus gives an example of how the Pharisees did this. Jesus quotes Ex. 20 "Honor your father and mother. Whoever speaks evil of their parents will be put to death." But, they looked for loopholes. If they didn't like their parents or not interested in supporting them in their Senior years, they would merely corbanize all their possessions making them conveniently unavailable for parents use but, very available for their own use. Corban was to vow, that property is a gift to God. It was to be used only by that individual until actually given to God. The priests held them to that vow over the need of their parents so in v. 12 You no longer permit him to do anything for his parents. If you want to hang onto more of your wealth...just Corbanize. That will neatly exempt you from the commandment "Honor your Father and mother." Note that Honoring your parents is not invalidated for adults. The people of the day were spreading a religious glaze over their own greed and selfishness. Do we ever try to pull this one off?

I knew a guy in seminary who sounded so very spiritual. He talked about how God wanted him to stay at home with his kids while he was finishing seminary. The problem was he couldn't hold down a job and provide for his family. He didn't care that other seminary students were trying to keep the family fed...he knew that God wanted him home. It can be tough to argue a direct vision from God. But, we know that God will never tell us to do something that is in conflict with the word. This individual was not properly caring for his family. He put a spiritual glaze over his own selfishness.

Are we ever tempted to corbanize things we own? We buy a real nice car and say, this is God's car. I'm going to use it for His glory. But, how much use has He been getting out of your car? We corbanize our homes. This is god's house, He's provided for it. Were going to be able to have folks over and study the Bible. But...it's not happening. We build it or buy it, spread a thick pious glaze on it, then go use it for our own behalf having "corbanized" it. We pray to God and say if you bless me in this position financially I'll give this amount to missions...but we forget. God this is your business, this is your talent, this is your time...Is this

convicting? God wants our hearts not just our lips. Lets stop fooling ourselves by spreading a religious glaze on our selfishness.

Point number 4. More heart begins with confession. In order to be real with God, most of us will need to come in confession to Him. In a few minutes were going to have an opportunity to come clean before God. We will ask Him to reveal areas in our life where we are more lip than heart. Verse 20 says, "That which proceeds out of a man, that is what defiles the man". The stuff that comes out proves that polutedness within. From within proceeds the thoughts. It all begins there doesn't it? Let be read the list (v. 21-22)

Has your faith become more lip and less heart? Maybe it's time to ask God to unmask some inconsistencies. Ask yourself.

Do I present myself to others as better than I really am?

Or not as bad as I really am?

Am I more concerned with upholding traditions than fostering a heart for God?

Has my faith gone to seed in a legalistic bag of rules? A list of right and wrongs?

Am I quick to recognize and point out the flaws in others?

Has church become dull, same old repetition?

Do I come to church to impress others. Come to look pious or meet God?

Is there an area of my life I have corbanized? A place where I've justified my own selfishness and spread a religious glaze over the top?

Spend some time before God in confession. It's easier to have clean hands than a pure heart. The thoughts roam on private property only you and God know about. Is your heartbeat strong for God.

## **Study Questions**

### **"All Lips and No Heart"**

Mark 7:1-23

**Warm up:** (pick one to share with the group...this will help us get to know each other better and begin talking with each other.)

15-20 minutes

- 1) Tell the group where you lived when you were eight years old.
- 2) Describe a time when you got really dirty.
- 3) Recall a time when your parents had to wash your mouth out with soap.

**Dig in:** 30 minutes

- 1) As you read through Mark 7:1-23. What is the issue that Jesus and the Pharisees are debating?
- 2) What list of rules (things to do and things one should not do) were enforced growing up? Were some of these influenced by the church?
- 3) Rules and traditions were originally designed to help people obey God. How could those traditions go to seed? How could they actually block someone from God?
- 4) How would you define what it means to be spiritual?
- 5) What did calling something "Corban" mean to people in New Testament times? How do we corbanize "spread a religious glaze over our selfishness" today?
- 6) What does it mean to have more lip than heart? In our worship? In our jobs? at home?

**Reflect:** (10 Minutes)

- 7) What are some practical steps we can take to be people of God with more heart and less lip. What can we do this next week?

8) How has your view of what it takes to be spiritual changed over the last few years? How can we determine whether we are spiritual or not?

**Lets pray for each other:**

(Requests and Praises)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)