

**Union United Methodist Church**  
Spring FOCUS Bible School, 2024  
FOCUS: Followers of Christ Understanding Scripture  
Study: **Gospel of Mark**

**Week 7: April 24, 2024**

This Week's Study: **Mark 7 & 8**  
Prepared by Pastor Michael Larbi

## 1. **Layout of the Gospel of Mark**

### 1) **Our Focus in Studying Mark.**

Our focus in studying Mark is who Jesus is, and what Jesus taught us about the Kingdom of God - especially about living the life of faith in Christ. As disciples of Christ, we are also interested in how Jesus lived and how he conducted his ministry. Not much attention will be paid to the arguments of scholars on various themes.

### 2) **Layout of Mark**

Similar to John, the first half of Mark focuses Jesus the Teacher & Preacher, his teachings, and the miracles he performed. The second half goes into more of Jesus' identity, his death and resurrection, and his commission of his disciples.

1. Mark 1:1-11 - Prologue - John the Baptist' preparatory work, Jesus comes on the scene.
2. Mark 1:14-10:52 - Jesus the Preacher/Teacher; Teachings, Healings & Miracles
3. Mark 11:1- 16:20 -Jesus the Son of God - Betrayal, Death, Resurrection... Commissioning of Disciples, Ascension

## 4) **Mark 7 & 8 Overview**

In Chapter 7, we encounter Jesus teaching again on some important topics. As usual the teaching is followed by a demonstration of God's power working through Jesus.

- Mark 7:1-13 - Jesus Points Out The Negative Impact of Tradition
- Mark 7:14-23 - Jesus Teaches on What Defiles A Person
- Mark 7:24-30 - Syrophenician Woman - Persistent Faith & Jesus' Response
- Mark 7:31-37 - Deaf Man Healed, Jesus does "everything well"
- Mark 8:1-10 - Kingdom Power At Work Again: Feeding 4,000

## 1) Mark 7:1-13 – Jesus Points Out the Negative Impact of Tradition

- **Tradition of the Elders**

- The Problem

The Pharisees noticed Jesus' disciples eating with "defiled hands"

The real offense? **Not observing the tradition of the elders.**

"They noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. 3(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders;

4and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.)" 7:2-4 NRSV

- Jesus' Reaction When Challenged

"So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

" 7:5 NRSV

Jesus' response has a lot to teach us:

- *God wants heart worship and honor, not lip service and human ways of doing things.*

Jesus said:

"Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honors me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me;

7in vain do they worship me,

teaching human precepts as doctrines." 7:6-8NRSV

- *We should not replace God's commands with human tradition*  
'You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'" ' Mark 7:8

Jesus added: "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! "

The example he gave is the command to honour parents: "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.'" 7:10

He explained that, instead of observing the command to honor father and mother, they would say to their parents: "whatever support you might have had from me is Corban (an offering to God)." 7:11

Since they treated help of parents as an offering to God, it was easy to ignore doing anything for Mum and Dad. As a result, "you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother." Mark 7:12 NIV

- **Traditions Can Nullify (Make Void) the Word of God.**

The biggest danger of traditions is that they can nullify God's word. They can easily set aside what the Lord instructs us to do. Jesus concluded:

**"Thus, you nullify [make void] the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."** 7:13 NIV

Traditions in a church or community of believers are good. But they can lose their original good intent. And we can also get to the point where we place more emphasis on the traditions than on what God instructs us to do in His Word.

## **2) Mark 7:14-23 - Jesus Teaches on What Defiles a Person**

Jesus spoke again to the crowd without explaining himself. His message was rather cryptic (a parable):

“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.<sup>15</sup>**Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.**” 7:14-15 NIV

In private, Jesus explained this parable to his disciples when they asked:

- **Jesus Was Talking About What Defiles the Heart.**

18He said to them, “Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, 19since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)” NRSV

The NIV put it this way

“Are you so dull?” he asked.

“Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them?<sup>19</sup>**For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.**”(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

In other words, physical food cannot defile a person’s spirit (heart, inner being).

Question: what can defile the heart?

- **What Comes Of Our Hearts is What Defiles Us**

‘And he said, “It is what comes out of a person that defiles.” 7:20 NRSV.

**“What comes out of a person is what defiles them”** 7:20 NIV.

If we do not have clean hearts, that is what will come out.

If we harbor grudges, hatred, anger, etc. within, it comes out in actions that we call sin. That is what defiles us.

- **What Is in Our Hearts Come Out In Our Actions**

“For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder,<sup>22</sup>adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

**23All these evils come from inside and defile a person.**” 7:21-23 NIV

Jesus said in Luke:

**"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."** Luke 6:45 NKJV

- **Therefore, "Guard your heart!"**  
**"Above all else, guard your heart,**  
**for everything you do flows from it."**  
Proverbs 4:23 NIV

**"Keep your heart with all vigilance,**  
**for from it flow the springs of life."**  
Proverbs 4:23 NRSV

How do we keep our hearts and guarantee actions that please the Lord?  
Proverbs 4 tells us:

**"My child, be attentive to my words;**  
**incline your ear to my sayings.**  
**21 Do not let them escape from your sight;**  
**keep them within your heart.**  
**22 For they are life to those who find them,**  
**and healing to all their flesh."**  
Proverbs 4:20-22 NRSV

20 My son, pay attention to what I say;  
turn your ear to my words.  
21 Do not let them out of your sight,  
keep them within your heart;  
22 for they are life to those who find them  
and health to one's whole body. NIV

### 3) Mark 7:24-30 - Syrophenician Woman - Persistent Faith & Jesus' Response

In Mark 5, we saw the woman who had been haemorrhaging for 12 years get healed by the power of the Holy Spirit from Jesus into her body in response to her faith.

Here we see another woman of faith receive help for her daughter.

Some key facts:

- Jesus entered a house discreetly trying to avoid notice.  
"He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice" 7:24 NRSV
- The woman heard about Jesus and seeking him out *humbly*  
"but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet" 7:25
- She was not a Jew - she was Syrophenician  
"Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter" 7:26
- Jesus taught that his first calling was to the "children" - the Jews  
"He said to her, **"Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."** 7:27
- Despite Jesus' humbling metaphor, the woman persisted and got what she wanted.

28But she answered him, **"Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."** 29Then he said to her, **"For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter."**

This is a great example of persistent faith.

In the case of the woman in Mark 5, she heard of Jesus, spoke to herself words of faith and acted on that faith to draw on the power of God.

In this case, the woman persisted when it looked like Jesus would help her. Persistence is very important. When a prayer does not seem to get answered, we must not give up. Jesus taught that

**"men always ought to pray and not lose heart"** Luke 18:1 NKJV

#### 4) Mark 7:31-37 - Deaf Man Healed, Jesus does **"everything well"**

- Notice the similarity with the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead

**32**They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and **they begged him to lay his hand on him.**

**33**He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. **34**Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, **"Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."**

- Jesus ALWAYS does all things well:  
**37** They were astounded beyond measure, saying, **"He has done everything well;** he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

#### 5) Mark 8:1-10 - Kingdom Power at Work Again: Feeding 4,000

There are many similarities in this miracle feeding of a crowd of 4,000 with that of the feeding of the 5,000.

This demonstrates the fact **the exercise of the power of God is repeatable.**

- Like the feed of the 5,000
  - This was part of Jesus' ministry of compassion"  
**"1**In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, **2**"**I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.** **3**If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance."**"** Mark 8:1-3 NRSV
  - Jesus Fed People Spiritually and Physically  
**"... they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat."**

In Mark 6, he had said to his disciples, when they wanted to send away the crowd: **"You give them something to eat."** Mark 6: 34 NRSV

To Jesus, it is important to feed people spiritually, and materially as well. God knows that we have material and physical needs. It is not enough to feed people spiritually; we must feed them physically too. The reverse is also true.

- **"We don't have" is not an acceptable excuse to God.**  
Again, as in the case of the 5,000, the disciples complained:

His disciples replied, "How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?" 8:4

8:5 He asked them, **"How many loaves do you have?"**  
They said, "Seven."

Notice the similarities. This is important.

**38And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see."**  
When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."

Matthew's account adds that Jesus then said,  
**"Bring them here to me"** Matthew 14:18 NIV

This is very important lesson for us.

When we think we don't have, we actually have plenty. Our little, with God's blessing, becomes more than enough!

Here is something I noticed a long time ago. The miracles in the Bible mostly started with something people already had in their hands. God took the little they had and multiplied it!

Lesson: Take an inventory and give God something to work with, no matter how little. Jesus asked and said:  
**"How many loaves have you? Go and see."**

- No Panic, Depend on the Blessing of God



8:6 Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. 7 They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed

- Waste Nothing, Your “leftovers” might be seed for the next blessing! They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. 9 Now there were about four thousand people.

### Daily Study Schedule & Questions

During the next week, read Mark 7 and 8 carefully, and in multiple versions. We'll continue in chapter 8 next week.

Also read the notes in this outline. Follow the breakdown of the chapter:

- Mark 7:1-13 - Jesus Points Out The Negative Impact of Tradition
- Mark 7:14-23 - Jesus Teaches on What Defiles A Person
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- Mark 7:31-37 - Deaf Man Healed, Jesus does “everything well”
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Compare the miracles here with those in chapter 6. Do you learn anything similar about faith works, what God responds to, and how God responds?

Make notes of what you learn in each of these sections and share with your group next week.