

The heart of the matter

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[0:00] Well, now we have the privilege of turning in God's Word together to the Gospel of Mark chapter 7. We'll be looking at verses 1 through 23 this morning.

We're going to see in this passage this interaction that Jesus has with the Pharisees, the religious rulers of the day, and the strong rebuke that he gives them in regards to their teaching.

Perhaps some of us here are interested in World War II history. It's kind of one of my favorite parts of history to study, and many of you probably know how the British entered the war in 1939 by declaring war on Germany.

But in those late months of 1939, there wasn't a whole lot of action happening until early 1940 when Allied forces attempted to push the Nazis out of Norway.

It was a rather unsuccessful, poorly coordinated mission. And so there's a lot of fear on the part of the British to think, can we defeat the Nazis? What's going to happen to our nation?

[0:57] And so this was not only felt by the public, but also those within Parliament. And so this led to this two-day debate regarding this military crisis and the future of Britain against the Nazis.

Many of them actually questioned the leadership of Neville Chamberlain, who was a prime minister at the time, and questioned whether he was the right man for the job. And to the end of this long debate, there was actually a member of Neville Chamberlain's own party, an MP by the name of Leo Amory, who rose to speak.

And he gave this rather lengthy speech, and he ended his speech with a quote from Oliver Cromwell, who 300 years previously had stormed the House of Commons in order to dismiss the long Parliament.

And these are the words that he repeated to the prime minister, Chamberlain. He said, you have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you.

In the name of God, go. Within two days, Chamberlain had resigned, and Winston Churchill had become the prime minister. See, Parliament had gathered to kind of discuss this military failure and to think what needed to change on this military front.

[2:10] But what Amory was pointing out to the members of Parliament and the public, that it wasn't Norway specifically that was the issue. The issue was leadership itself. And so in our passage today, we're going to see something very similar, because the Pharisees, these religious leaders, they begin debating hand-washing.

And Jesus comes to them and says, hand-washing really isn't the issue here. The heart is the issue. And so similar to Amory, we have Jesus here that rebukes this poor leadership of the Pharisees, who's pointing out their ignorant teachings, their self-righteous practices, and at the same time revealing the beauty of the gospel.

And so I hope that's what we can see in our passage together this morning. Let's turn there and read together. Mark chapter 7, starting in verse 1. The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.

The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of elders. And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.

And they observe many other traditions, such as washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law asked Jesus, why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?

[3:37] He replied, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites. As it is written, these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain. Their teachings are merely human rules. You have let go of the commands of God and are holding to the human traditions. And he continued, you have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions.

For Moses said, honor your father and your mother. And anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. 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, then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.

Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that. Again, Jesus called to the crowd, he called the crowd to him and said, listen to me, everyone and understand this.

Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them. After he left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

[4 : 58] Are you so dull, he asked? Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from outside can defile them? 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. He went on, what comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly.

All these things come from inside and defile a person. This is the word of God. Let's turn in prayer to Lord again. Lord, we thank you for the blessing of your word.

We acknowledge that it is a light into our path. So we ask, Lord, that you illuminate your scriptures this morning through the work and the power of your Holy Spirit. Lord, we pray, Lord, that you may give us a tent of hearts, softened hearts and opened eyes and ears to receive with gladness your instruction.

That we may hear and rejoice in the message of salvation. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, if we were to start at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, we'd see that Jesus has these repeated confrontations with the Pharisees.

[6 : 28] And as we approach this passage in Mark 7, we see this. There's this really this this first and most significant confrontation where Jesus rebukes these Pharisees. And it's really this this pivotal moment in the Gospel because we see Jesus addressing the very heart of the Christian faith.

We see this conflict between tradition and truth, between external religiosity and internal faith. And so the three things I want us to focus on in this passage are are this.

We're going to focus first on the problem of tradition. Second, the pollution of the heart. And three, the provision of grace. The problem of tradition, the pollution of the heart and the provision of grace. So considering the problem of tradition first, I think it may be helpful to kind of make sure we have a clear understanding of who the Pharisees are. Because if you've grown up in the church or been around here a long time, it's oftentimes we just recognize the Pharisees as being the bad guys, those who oppose Jesus.

But what's their background? Where do they come from and where do they kind of fit into Jewish culture and religion? Well, we think that the Pharisees emerged during this intertestamentary period.

[7 : 36] This 400 years after the Old Testament was completed and before the New Testament begins. And these Pharisees, they weren't priests. These were lay people, a lay movement within Jewish culture.

They were teachers of the law. They wanted to preserve Jewish culture, Jewish identity, Jewish faithfulness. And so they did so by having a strong adherence to knowing and obeying Scripture. And in order to obey Scripture, they developed what was known as the tradition of elders. It was basically these man-made traditions and customs that kind of fenced or created a wall of protection around God's laws.

But it was ultimately these traditions that led the Pharisees and many others astray. And so when we think about the problem of tradition, maybe that may cause us to bristle at first because we recognize there's great value in tradition, especially when we think about the tradition within the free church and tradition within Scottish Presbyterianism.

And so the point is to say not that all tradition is bad. There's great value in tradition. Even how we're doing going about worship this morning in the liturgy that we have, this is a form of tradition that's based on God's words that allows us to recognize the drama of the gospel as it unfolds.

[8:47] There's other traditions that we hold to, like the sacraments, like baptism and the Lord's Supper, even certain things like a carol service at Christmas. Those things aren't bad. What happens is we have tradition that contradicts or takes us away from the Word of God.

And so when we recognize these traditions that the elders, excuse me, the traditions of elders that were put forward by the Pharisees, we recognize that they created them at first to protect the law, but in fact they actually held them in such a state that they became equal with the law and then began to overshadow the law and then actually became contrary to the law.

And so what would have been this spiritual movement to preserve Scripture ultimately became this deadly disease of religious externalism. And so what we see at the beginning of this chapter, the Pharisees come to Jesus and his disciples and they're criticizing them for their uncleanness because they're not washing their hands as they should before they eat.

And they would have been referencing Old Testament law. This law would have been ceremonial law for the priests, the washing that they needed to do before they make sacrifice. And so what the Pharisees were doing here, they were applying this to themselves and saying, well, we need to be clean.

And so we see Mark giving this commentary in verses 3 and 4 and saying, they had a lot of rules about cleanliness, about when they went out into the marketplace and when they came back and how they need to wash their cups and their dishes, even their furniture.

[10:12] And we may think, well, that doesn't seem like that's such a big deal. I mean, it seems like a pretty good practice to wash up, especially in a time where there's not modern medicine and certainly sickness and disease going around. And even today we tell our kids to wash up before we have dinner.

And so what's the big deal with having these practical washing rituals? But the thing is, it wasn't really practical in nature. They were much more concerned about the ritual itself because they weren't so concerned about making their hands clean, but they thought by following these rituals they were making their hearts clean.

And so again, we see this preoccupation with religious externalism. I don't know if some of you here may go to the gym. I try to go a few times a week. And a common trend that I'm seeing growing that I really, really dislike is when people go to the gym with their iPhone in a tripod in order to record themselves working out.

And I don't know who these people are, how many followers they think they have on TikTok, and who really cares about what they squatted or how many reps they did in a workout. But it's becoming, I mean, I don't know why these people do this, but it's really ironic in the sense that they become much more preoccupied with their appearance than the actual physical working out. Because they're doing less work than most of us because they have to set up the tripod, and then they get in position and do their lift, and they come back and they look at the camera, and then they change the angle of the tripod again and then do it again.

[11:34] And you want to think you made the effort to be in the gym, put forth the real effort without caring what other people think. But they think they're really the benefits, they care more about the appearance of working out than the benefits themselves, or the benefits don't really count in their mind unless someone else has seen them do it.

And so I think the same is for the Pharisees here. They're rejecting this fundamental inward godliness in replace for this outward display of righteousness. And this is what Jesus is calling them out about.

He calls them in verse six, he refers to them as hypocrites, for they honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. And so he's actually quoting from the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 29, where Isaiah the prophet is, he's really bringing this prediction of destruction on the city of Jerusalem because of the hypocrisy of the people, because they're practicing this false worship of God.

And so we know this word hypocrisy, or a hypocrite to be a rather derogatory term in our day and age. We don't want to be called a hypocrite. We may be cautious in calling other people hypocrites, but in the Greek, this word really just, it was a term for a stage actor, for someone who performed or someone who wore a mask.

And so we recognize that an actor, how they perform on a stage is very different, how they may act backstage or in real life. And Jesus is saying the same is true for these Pharisees because they're pretending to follow God's laws, but they're actually very far from him.

[13:02] There's this disconnect, Jesus is saying, between their lips and their hearts. They're pretending to worship God, but also ultimately much more concerned with this self-worship. And so there's other times that we see in the gospel, Jesus has these encounters with the Pharisees.

If we return to the gospel of Matthew 23, he announces these seven woes upon the scribes and the Pharisees. This is what he says in Matthew 23, verse 27.

He says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. And I wonder if that may describe some of us here today, that we may cling to outward displays of tradition rather than truly recognizing and internalizing the truth of the gospel.

I think we see this played out in our culture a lot. I was down in London a few weeks ago preaching at London City Presbyterian Church, and I was staying with the minister, Andy Longway, and that Saturday we got up and did a park run that he often does.

[14:10] And these park runs happen all around the UK, and they gather hundreds of people, depending on where you are, every single Saturday morning. And before the 5K race, there was an announcement. They were saying, we need more volunteers.

It takes dozens of volunteers to pull this off every Saturday, but also honoring those volunteers who have been there week after week, you know, 100 times, 200 times, and wanted to give them proper recognition.

And it got me thinking, well, why are these people serving here every week? And not to say there's anything wrong with being altruistic or wanting to commit to volunteerism, but for many of them, this is kind of like their church because they show up every week in order to either prove to themselves or prove to others maybe how good of a person they are.

Look, I work hard all week, and even then I'll wake up on a Saturday morning to volunteer at 8 a.m. in order for this race to get put on. Look at how good I am. I think the same can even be true in the church.

We can be tempted in similar ways. We can come faithfully on a Sunday morning and a Sunday evening. If you're a student, you can be involved in Scripture Union or Christian Union. You think about going to community groups and prayer meetings and Bible studies, and it can be all in the sense of keeping up appearances, as if we have to check enough boxes in order that God will be pleased with us when actually our hearts are truly far from God.

[15:33] And I think this can be true for even those who are in full-time ministry. I think of myself as I was studying this text and recognizing how often I can fall into the same trap of staying busy in ministry, in preaching and teaching and being a director for a missions organization, travel and strategy, but ultimately can feel very far from God because I'm finding my identity oftentimes in what I do.

And oftentimes when this happens, when I feel far from God, the answer that I internally think is, well, maybe I just need to lean a little bit further into my work. Maybe I need to try a little bit harder or do a little bit better and then God will be pleased with me.

Maybe then I'll reach this level of spiritual maturity. Maybe that rings true with some of you as well. The late poet T.S. Eliot wrote this once.

He said, the greatest sin is to do the right thing for the wrong reason. He says, at what point do we become legalists in our faith? When are we going through the motions without emotions?

Or worse, going through the motions because they have taken the place of our faith? In this state, we are no better than the Pharisees who Jesus set on their heads or bobbing dolls on a dashboard with glazed, empty smiles.

[16:55] I wonder if this can be true of us, that we've allowed our external customs and traditions to replace this need for true heart transformation.

I wonder if sometimes we can become the legalists that Eliot is speaking about here. When we think about legalism, what is legalism? What is a legalist?

It's someone who believes that their standing before God is based on their performance rather than God's grace. And so practically, we recognize that's not the truth of the gospel, but oftentimes in our lives, this is how we act, right?

Because we think we need to supplement God's grace with our own actions. We need to add something to this idea or this recipe of salvation in order for God to be pleased with us.

That's the recipe for legalism that Jesus is speaking about here. That we obey God because we think then we will earn his love. But the gospel says something very different.

[17:56] God loves us, therefore we obey. And so that brings us to our second point, the pollution of the heart. I'm sure many of you, we all have cell phones here.

We're probably used to using filters in Instagram or TikTok or different forms of social media or FaceTime when we communicate to one another. My parents are with us today, but often they live in the States.

And so we communicate through FaceTime often with them and we try to talk to them regularly. Or when I'm traveling, I talk to my kids using FaceTime. And typically when they take hold of the phone, the temptation is to start flipping through the filters and start talking to me as like a dinosaur or a dog or something.

And they become much more preoccupied with the technology than actually carrying on a conversation. And we see these filters are used in different forms, right? Whether it's to make you look younger or older or to change the aspect of your picture.

We recognize that though, what these filters do, they're creating this false image of ourselves. And this is essentially what these traditions of the elders, that's what they're doing. They're providing a filter for these Pharisees in order to create this false image of selves, that they look at these traditions that they're now keeping and say, look how good of a person I am.

[19:08] Look how righteous I am. And so the irony is, they think these traditions are maintaining a high view of the law when actually they're creating a rather low view of the law because law and tradition in their mind equals merit.

Keep the rules and God will accept you. Follow God's commands and then you'll be righteous. And maybe you're not familiar with church or maybe this is all new to you and you think this is what Christianity is all about.

No doubt, if you were to go on the pavement and just pull students walking by and ask them, what is Christianity all about? They'd probably give you an answer like that. Well, you have to be a good person in order for God to love you.

Similarly, probably people who reject Christianity, it's because they view God as some cosmic killjoy who's just ready to drop the hammer whenever you screw up. But what we see here is a very different picture in the scriptures.

And so if we go back to the Old Testament, we see God deliver his people out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, brings them into the wilderness where he gives them his law. He gives them the 10 commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

[20:17] And we see later on in the book of Exodus and into Leviticus, he gives them more laws, ceremonial laws and civil laws. And so if you've ever started a new Bible reading plan and you may be excited to start a new year, you get through Genesis and the first part of Exodus and you kind of feel like you hit this wall come second part of Exodus and Leviticus because it's just loaded with all these laws that we may not really understand their significance about sacrifice or Sabbath or clothing or feasts or social justice.

And so we may ask, what's the purpose of all these laws? Well, if we think about the Westminster Confession of Faith, and this is a document that we use to help us understand and articulate our faith, help us to understand what the Bible says and what we ought to believe, it talks about the law and it gives us three uses of the law.

The first use it says is, the law serves as a mirror. What does that mean? When God looks at the law, he sees his holiness and his perfection.

But when man looks at the law, we see our own sin. The law reveals just how far we have fallen from God's perfect standard. And so this is what Paul says in Romans 3, he says, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by works of the law.

Rather, through the law, we become conscious of our sin. And so for the Pharisees, really their big issue is they have a false understanding of what the law is meant to do.

[21:43] They think the law allows them to prove their cleanliness. And it's what's external to them is what makes them defiled. Jesus is saying something very different.

Look in our passage again in verse 20. He says, what comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come, and sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly.

All these evil things come from inside and defile a person. And so what Jesus is making clear here, it's not the external that defiles a person, but what is internal.

And so listen to what Paul says again in Romans 5, verse 12. He says, therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. He's basically saying, because Adam sinned, we have all sinned. And the law reveals to us just how sinful we are.

[22 : 57] The late Welsh minister, Martin Lloyd-Jones, he said this. He said, the sinner is an abomination to God. He is a monstrosity in God's universe.

He is altogether hateful and vile. We may hear those words and think, ooh, that sounds a bit harsh, like, Martin, what did you have for breakfast this morning? Like, take it easy. Because certainly the culture around us thinks, well, we are, man is basically good.

It's maybe circumstances around us that are to blame for our bad behavior, but what we just need to do is we just need to weigh the scales, right? If we simply just tip the scales a little bit in our favor of good, more good than bad, then we're seen as righteous.

Now, obviously, we wouldn't confess this in the church, but again, practically, this can play out in our lives. We recognize that we are depraved and sinful, but oftentimes we can think about our practice of coming to church and we're reading scripture and we're volunteering and we're serving the church and we think, you know what?

I'm doing pretty good. God must be pretty pleased with me. And that ultimately puts us in a pretty dangerous spot because it can show that we're failing to recognize the significance and pervasiveness of our own sin or that we're failing to recognize the perfection and superiority of God's standard.

[24 : 17] Ultimately, the Pharisees thought that the law and the tradition could save them, but the reality is that the law does not save. It only condemns. And so that's what separates Christianity from any other religion out there.

Other religions say, follow the law and be saved. That's what the Pharisees practiced, but Christianity says, you can't follow the law. You're not able to follow the law. But think for a second if you could follow the law, if the law could save you.

Because maybe we have that independent streak and we think, you know what? I just want to be able to control my own fate and so let me give it a try. But think about all the uncertainty that that would cause in our lives.

Because how would you ever know that you follow the law closely enough? And so we'd have this temptation to think we've got to keep working harder and harder and really have no sense of assurance that we've ever met God's perfect standard.

And so that'll only lead to the sense of discouragement and despair and anxiety in our lives. And does that not describe the ways the Pharisees acted? These were not winsome teachers who just kind of came to Jesus cheerfully and his disciples.

[25 : 24] They came looking for a fight. They were judgmental. They were self-righteous, thinking that the law could save, but the law only condemns. The law is not a filter.

It is a mirror. And so what Jesus wants the Pharisees to see here, he wants them to see their own depravity. He wants them to recognize their fallenness, to sense their helplessness, to feel the weight of their own sin.

And so when we think about that long list of sins that Jesus listed, you may think, okay, that's enough. Like, you can stop. Or it kind of leads us to think about that other person or that other person. Yeah, that describes that person. When we need to recognize that what Jesus is listing here, it's describing you and I in our total state of depravity.

That there's nothing that we can do to save ourselves. There's no amount of effort that we can rescue ourselves from the penalty of sin and death. And so we can stop there and pray, right? No, of course not. This isn't the end of the story. This leads us to our final point, the provision of grace that Jesus makes clear to his disciples as well as the Pharisees.

[26:37] You may remember back in 2010, what became national or international news. It was this Chilean mining accident where 33 men were trapped in this copper mine 2,000 feet under the ground.

And they had little food. They had little supplies down there, little water. And for the first 17 days, those who were on the surface didn't know if these men were alive or not.

And it was only until they could drill this little hole down there and retrieve this letter that said all 33 men were alive. And so this put the engineers into high gear trying to figure out a way to rescue these men while also delivering them supplies while they tried to figure this out.

And so they formulated this plan. They were going to drill this shaft down there and create this rescue mechanism to bring them up one at a time. And it took 69 days for them to execute this plan that ultimately all 33 men were saved.

These miners were left under the ground. They weren't able to save themselves. It wasn't because of their own efforts that they got rescued. They had to rely on someone above. In the same way, we see something very similar in this passage that man is totally without hope.

[27:49] We are unable to save ourselves. We are liable to sin and death. It is only Christ who comes and to rescue and offer salvation. And so if we look to the actions of the Pharisees, we should really see this great irony because they are believing that they are protecting Old Testament ceremonial law when in fact, they're totally ignorant of the reason and the intended purpose of this law.

We turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 10 verse 1. This is what it says. It says, For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. What does that mean? It means that the law was never intended to save us. So think about all these Old Testament laws, all these sacrifices, all these offerings, there were burnt offerings and peace offerings and sin offerings and guilt offerings, grain offerings, but they had to be repeatedly given over and over again.

Why? Because they weren't ultimately effective in bringing lasting change. The law pointed forward to someone else who could provide that lasting change, and that's Jesus.

And so if we think about the Westminster Confession of Faith again, in chapter 19, it actually says this about the law. It says that ceremonial laws prefigure Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits.

[29:26] The reason that God gave the people of Israel ceremonial laws was not for them to keep themselves clean, but to point them forward to a spotless Savior who would come to provide lasting cleansing in their lives.

And so Jesus says this in verse 18, Are you so dull? Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from outside can defile them?

For it doesn't go into their heart, but into their stomach, and then out of their body. In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean. And that's a little bit of commentary that Mark uses at the end of that passage to explain for us what's really going on here.

Because all we'd have to do is jump forward in the New Testament to the book of Acts. In Acts 10, you may remember these visions that Peter, who's the leader of the New Testament church, is having of all these unclean foods and animals that he has instructed to kill and eat.

And he refuses and says, This is against ceremonial law. We're not supposed to do this. And again, he's told to kill and eat. At the same time, a Roman centurion comes to him, Cornelius, and invites him back to his house.

[30:34] This Gentile family where they want to know the true meaning of the gospel and who Jesus truly is. And Peter recognizes at this point that it's no longer any rules regarding these unclean foods that Gentiles themselves shouldn't be viewed as unclean.

But all is now permissible and seen as clean through Christ. And so, when we think about that passage, you may think, Okay, that's the point in time in the New Testament church.

They're in Acts 10 where all these laws are kind of go by the wayside. But Mark is making very clear here. It doesn't happen after Jesus' departure. This change occurs at Jesus' arrival because the law points forward to the real image who is now here.

The barrier to cleanliness has now been broken. And Christ has come who makes all things clean. And so, Jesus' harsh rebuke of the Pharisees is not to embarrass them or simply to ridicule them,

but to reveal to them their need for a sinless substitute.

To reveal and to demonstrate they need someone to do what the law could not do. Someone who could legally declare them righteous before God. And so, this is what the whole Gospel of Mark goes through.

[31:50] That Jesus, it's Jesus' journey to the cross where he willingly suffers and dies in order to pay the penalty for your sin and for mine. Taking away our guilt and giving us his own righteousness.

And so, this is what we believe and that we preach. That we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And so, this is the invitation for each one of us today that we may receive the righteousness of Jesus.

We may receive his grace that comes through our own faith. And so, that we don't try to strive after Jesus to earn his satisfaction or his pleasure. but we come to him in our filth and in our sin and in our guilt recognizing that he's the only one who can clean us.

Horatius Bonar who is a Scottish minister from the 1800s was famous not only as a preacher but also as a hymn writer. And he wrote these words in one of his hymns. He said, Upon a life I have not lived.

Upon a death I did not die. Another's life. Another's death. Death. I stake my whole eternity. And so, when we do that when we stake our whole eternity on the life and death of Jesus it's not only going to transform our hearts it's also going to transform our relationship to the law because we said that the law serves as a mirror but as a believer the law also serves as a guide for us.

[33:18] We don't throw away the law because Jesus came. Jesus came to fulfill the law. We don't follow the law out of duty but we follow the law out of hearts of gratitude and joy when we recognize the beauty and the blessing of the gospel in our lives.

Therefore, we are made able through the power of the Spirit to be obedient to Christ. And so, this is the truth that we see in our passage this morning. That tradition wrongly says obey me and hope to live.

The law rightly says you can't obey me so you must certainly die. But Christ graciously says I have obeyed so you can surely live.

Let's cling to this truth this morning. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you for the truth of the gospel that comes through this harsh rebuke of the Pharisees.

And while it's so often our temptation to distance ourselves from them, may we identify ourselves, identify with them this morning to recognize how often we rely on traditions and our good works and customs in order to receive your pleasure and your approval.

[34:34] Lord, help us to recognize the truth and the beauty of the gospel that we are sinners saved by grace, that our righteousness comes only through the blood of Jesus.

And so, Lord, we ask that you cleanse us this morning. We pray, Lord, that we will recognize and stand under the law as condemned but to see Christ having fulfilled it that therefore we may use the law as a guide for Christian living.

Not out of a sense of duty but a sense of true joy that we may follow after you all the days of our life. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.