

Human-Centered v.s God-Centered Discipleship

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Our Gospel reading today is a reading from the Gospel According to Mark, chapter 7, verses 1 through 23.

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around 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 the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash, and they observe many other traditions, such as the 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 the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands? He replied, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites.

[1 : 32] 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 on to 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 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 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 had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

[2 : 47] Are you so dull, he asked? Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the 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 evils come from inside and defile a person. This is the gospel of the Lord. Good morning, everyone.

My name is Andrew. I'm one of the pastors here. And why don't we go before the Lord before we turn to his word. Father, we pray that you would make much of your son, Jesus Christ, in the preaching of your word, that we would behold him as our great high priest, whose name is love.

[4 : 0 0] The spotless, risen Lamb of God, who in our place bore the punishment that we deserved, and has given us his righteousness by faith.

We so savor that reality in Christ this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen. All right. Well, we have been in Mark's gospel.

We've been following Jesus through this gospel, and he's been doing a lot of incredible things. Last week, we saw how he fed over 5,000 people. And so at this point in the narrative, in Mark chapter 7, Jesus has developed, as you might imagine, quite a following, quite a reputation.

So great is his reputation in this, at this point in the story, that verse 1 tells us that there are some members from the Jewish religious establishment, the Pharisees, and even some teachers of the law who came all the way into Galilee in the north, from the south in Jerusalem, because Jesus had gotten their attention.

And in particular, they're concerned about the kinds of disciples that Jesus is making. Because, see, Jesus, his disciples are behaving quite contrary to the kinds of disciples that the Pharisees were making.

[5 : 1 2] And the point of contention that we're looking at today has to do with a matter of cleanliness. All right? Cleanliness, and not like hygiene, but spiritual, ritual cleanliness. In the eyes of the Pharisees, in the eyes of these teachers of the law who came all the way from the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus' disciples were unclean because, why?

As it says in verse 2, they were eating with unwashed hands. Oh, no. All right. Now, I'm going to talk more about that and what's going on in the minds of the Pharisees and why this is such a big deal to them.

But before I lose some of you, in case some of you are thinking that this story is just some irrelevant religious dispute about cleansing rituals between some ancient Jewish teachers 2,000 years ago, can I just ask you to just lean in and hang on and just have an open mind?

Because I promise this really is more relevant than you might think. Even if you're here today and you couldn't care less about Jewish ritual cleansings, can I just ask you again, if you're here today and maybe you couldn't care less about being clean in the eyes of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Moses, let me ask you this.

Is it not true that we all still do want to be clean in at least some sense? Like clean in the eyes of someone or something. We all do, right?

[6 : 3 6] High schoolers in the room, you're not going to go on a date, all right, without taking a shower, all right? You're not going to clean up before your first job interview. And not just in like a physical sense of cleanliness.

We all want to be clean in every sense. We want a clean conscience. We want a clean record, a clean reputation, a clean bill of health. We all want to be clean. And sure, we all may have, excuse me, different ideas of what it means to be clean versus unclean.

But make no mistake, all of us, all of us operate within this duality, this dichotomy. This is clean and that is not clean. This is pure and sacred and right and that is vile and filthy and defiled.

At some point, excuse me, at some point, we all recognize this duality, these two categories, clean and unclean. And however we understand that distinction and wherever we draw those lines, what is true of each and every one of us is that we're all following what we believe will get us into the clean category, right?

The good category, the pure category, the just category, the category of the good guys. Whether it's in the eyes of God or whatever divine being we believe in or any other credible court of opinion, we're all trying to be clean rather than unclean.

[7 : 56] And this is because being made in God's image, we have a sense, we have an inherent affinity toward cleanliness. It's what we were made to be. We were made to be clean.

And at the same time, ever since we chose our way over God's way, every day we see all around us and even in ourselves so much evidence of filth and uncleanness. Things we know must make our maker gag.

Because of the way that we've wrongly treated this world, because of the way we've wrongly treated one another, who are made in God's image, there's so much that seems so soiled around us, so much that seems so far from what it ought to be.

And so like our maker, as those also made in the image of God, we gag too, don't we? And then even those of us who don't believe in this maker, we all, we are all trying and trying and trying to rid this world, to rid our lands, to rid our society, to rid ourselves of all that we believe to be unclean.

It's a natural thing for humans to do. We all want and we all seek to be clean and to get rid of what is unclean. So you see, we're not actually so different than the Pharisees and the teachers of the law here who are confronting Jesus about the uncleanness of his disciples.

[9 : 16] They cared about cleanness as far as they understood it. And so do we. So do we. They wanted to be clean too, and with good reason, probably better reasons than a lot of us have for the kinds of cleannesses that we pursue.

They were pursuing cleanness before God. The Pharisees were trying to live and lead the people of Israel into a national and spiritual purity in the eyes of Yahweh.

In many ways, this was their solemn act of repentance, an earnest effort to be clean and pleasing to their holy God. Their pursuit of cleanness, it came from their acknowledgement that the whole reason God had allowed their nation to go into exile and the whole reason they were still under occupation under the Roman Empire was because they had become unclean.

They'd disregarded the law of God and God's will for their lives. So honestly, the Pharisees had regard for the holiness and the purity of God that I sometimes dream that we would have as modern Bay Area Christians.

Like, I wish we were as zealous for the Word of God and for studying the Word of God as these Pharisees. I wish we hated immorality and impiety as much as the Pharisees.

[10 : 37] And in so many ways, I wish we were as careful as they were to keep clean, to observe the holy commands of our holy God. You see, that's where this big dispute came from.

It's because they had such a high regard for the commands of God. In the law of Moses, in Exodus chapter 30, verse 17, when God is giving Israel instructions for how His priests are to approach Him, God says to Moses, Make a bronze basin for washing.

Place it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and then put water in it. And then He says, Aaron and his sons, who are the priests, Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from this basin.

Whenever they enter the tent of meeting, that's where they met God, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. And so the message being communicated here is God is so holy that if you are unclean in His presence, you will die.

Why? Because He cannot and will not tolerate and abide uncleanness. So what the Pharisees, and it says in verse 3, what all the Jews at this point decided to do, what kind of tradition came up and was handed down for many generations at this point, happened was they decided not just to make sure that their priests were clean when they went to the temple, but they decided let's put a fence even around that and make sure we're all clean all the time.

[12 : 04] Let's wash our hands all the time. Wherever they're coming from, verse 4, coming from the marketplace, wherever, they committed to always washing their hands, and not just their hands, but their cups and their pitchers and their kettles and who knows what other washing traditions they had.

But again, it was all to be as clean as possible before God, which to them was the ultimate, most highest, most important kind of cleanliness. They wanted to uphold this instruction given to Moses and Aaron, and they put this fence of traditions and rules around it to make sure they never broke the law and became unclean again.

So you can see, right, you can hopefully appreciate, you have to have some respect for the intention here that these Pharisees had. You know, we usually easily write these Pharisees off as self-righteous and narrow-minded and legalistic, dogmatic, you know, just evil, one-dimensional bad guys.

But no, there's a vigilance here. There is a reverence even for God and His purity that I wish that I had, that I wish we as a church had ourselves. And that's the background we need as we come into this passage, as we approach verse 5 here, where the Pharisees and the teachers of the law confront Jesus.

And they ask Him, why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?

[13 : 32] The Pharisees are critiquing Jesus' discipleship. They're critiquing Jesus' way of making faithful followers of Yahweh. See, for the Pharisees and the teachers of the law and for generations of elders who had gone before them, ever since Israel's return from exile, they'd devoted their whole lives to pursuing cleanness, never to have to go into exile again.

They've devoted their whole lives to being clean and to washing their hands. And in their minds, the very salvation and liberation and restoration of their people depended on them making disciples who also washed their hands for the sake of national cleanliness.

And yet here, they found in Jesus a different kind of discipleship, a different way, a way that they could only perceive to be wrong and defiled.

And yet for reasons that I hope to make explicit, Jesus, He doesn't see it that way at all. And so the question is why? Why not? Is it because Jesus has a lower regard for the holiness and the purity of God than the Pharisees?

Is it because Jesus doesn't care about ritual and ceremonial cleanness? Or is it because Jesus is anti-tradition? Well, no, no, and no. No one had a higher view of the holiness of God than Jesus.

[14 : 50] Remember what He said on the Sermon on the Mount? He said, Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. The same with ritual and ceremonial cleanness.

He had a high regard for that. He said, Not one jaw or tittle of the law will be abolished. And He told the lepers He healed to make sure they went and showed themselves to the priests according to the law of Moses.

And with regard to tradition, I mean, Jesus was the ultimate Jewish person. He loved tradition. He left traditions for us. He's not anti-tradition. No, Jesus had no problem with a high view of God's holiness.

He had no problem with the importance of cleanness before God. And He definitely isn't anti-tradition. But upon close inspection of what's going on in this encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees, we find that even if the original intentions behind the Pharisees' traditions were admirably in pursuit of cleanness before God, Jesus perceived in these Pharisees three problematic things about their cleansing tradition.

Three things that we all need to watch out for ourselves as people seeking our own kinds of cleanness. The first is that they had a presumptuous sense of authority.

[16 : 03] The second is that they had a self-serving pietism. And the third is that they had a heartless, externalized religiosity. A presumptuous sense of authority, a self-serving pietism, and a heartless, externalized religion.

Look with me at verses 7 and 8. The first thing I want you to notice is how Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for presumptuously elevating their own dogma and doctrine and authority above God's revealed commands.

Quoting from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus says, They worship me in vain. Their teachings are merely human rules. You have let go of, or this can be translated, you have abandoned, neglected, forsaken the commands of God, and you're holding on to human traditions.

Again, Jesus doesn't have a problem with tradition in and of itself, and neither should we actually. No human society and culture could function without traditions. They help bring order and stability and predictability.

They form and shape us in many positive ways. They bring protection, and they bring consistency. One tradition I'm aware of is, you know, Mike Francis, Pastor Mike, Maria's husband in the back.

[17 : 18] When he was pastoring out in Florida, one tradition that he had to maintain his integrity as a pastor is that on Saturday, in preparation for the Lord's Day, he would not watch any movies or any shows, lest his eyes fall upon something that might make him stumble or distract him from his preaching and pastoral ministry the following day.

You know, I admire him deeply for that commitment, for that tradition that he took on in his life. But at the same time, Pastor Mike also knew better than to say that every pastor had to live in that way in order to be a clean, righteous, faithful preacher and pastor in the eyes of God.

Because Pastor Mike knew, right? He knew the difference between, thus saith the Lord, and thus saith Pastor Mike, right? We have to distinguish. We have to distinguish between what God says and what others say.

We have to understand that there's a vast difference in the authority between even a pastor and what God says. What God says is ultimate. What humans say is not.

And this is such an important thing for us to discern and remember as we talk about discipleship in this church. You know, there is a church not far from here. They're actually quite excellent at discipleship.

[18 : 30] I envy their discipleship culture in many ways. They've led many people into deeper relationships with Christ. But there are stories of how they've gone overboard in their approach to follow me as I follow Christ.

For example, there are stories about leaders in this church saying you can or cannot date this person. Oh, you're going to buy a new vehicle. You should buy this minivan and only that one.

And you know, they're not maybe not exactly saying, thus saith the Lord, but they're insisting on these things with such pressure and with such authority that many of their followers have felt like to make any other decision would be to sin against God, to rebel against God, and to do something that is wicked in God's eyes.

And I'm sure, you know, these leaders probably had good reasons why they commended or didn't recommend certain people to date or why they thought, you know, a Dodge Caravan is the one to go for.

All right? Maybe it's good to serve the church, drive a lot of people to church. I don't know. But I think this kind of elevation over, this elevation of tradition over the explicit commands of Scripture is exactly what Jesus is warning against.

[19 : 44] And this is actually why we so often plead with you, our congregation, to be in your Bibles, to read your Bibles, to know your Bibles. It's so that you can discern what God says versus what mere humans say.

This is what Jesus was doing. Look at how he distinguishes the different sources of authority here in verse 6. Whereas the Pharisees are quoting their elders, right? Jesus quotes to them the divinely inspired prophet Isaiah.

And then in verse 10, he says, Moses, right? He says, Moses says, but you say. He's showing that there's a difference in who says what and who has the authority. And this, again, is so important because inside and outside the church, everyone and everything around us is constantly trying to make us its disciple, trying to convince us that their way is the way to become clean and whole.

But just as Jesus submitted himself only to the Father's will, only to the revealed authority of the Scriptures, so must we submit ourselves to the Scriptures. Jesus had an incredibly high view of the Bible as the very Word of God and so must we.

So discipleship under Jesus demands that we constantly distinguish between he said, she said, we said, and thus saith the Lord. What was Jesus always saying?

[21 : 07] It is written. It is written. Now, the problem wasn't just that the Pharisees didn't have a high enough view of Scripture or that they elevated their tradition too high.

They were also expressing their piety in a way that was incredibly self-serving rather than God-honoring and loving toward their neighbors.

Look with me now at verses 9 through 13. For the sake of time, I'm just going to read verse 9 and then explain what Jesus is talking about here. He says, you have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions.

So Jesus gives this example of how the Pharisees not only elevated their tradition above God's command, but they also used it to serve themselves, all in the name of being religious and pious.

So basically, there was this thing that they would do where they would dedicate something to God. Let's just imagine. Maybe they say, I'm going to dedicate this cow to God. And by saying, this cow is dedicated to God, they were also making a vow not to give that cow to any other person or any other cause.

[22 : 18] So even if something might happen, what they had dedicated was this cow and they might continue to enjoy the milk for themselves, but let's say maybe their parents came into a financial hardship.

And they might have been helped by the milk or even by the sale of the whole cow. Well, the Pharisees would say, sorry, I actually cannot take care of you with this cow, mom and dad.

It's dedicated to the Lord. I can enjoy its milk, but I can't share it with you because I made a holy vow. And thus, by upholding this tradition that wasn't even in the law of Moses, other than maybe Moses commending people to keep their promises, they gave themselves a reason to break the explicit commandment, the fifth commandment, honor your father and your mother.

And it wasn't just their parents who they were failing to love and honor in the name of this pietism. This tradition of theirs also gave them a sense of superiority. Superiority over all those who didn't uphold these traditions that they insisted upon.

Through the lens of their made-up tradition, the Pharisees felt justified in judging and condemning Jesus' disciples and anyone else who didn't uphold their hand-washing rule gave them a judgmental rubric by which to consider others as defiled and unclean.

[23 : 44] They came to Jesus, why did they eat with defiled hands? They asked Jesus about his disciples. See, their tradition, which began with good intentions, it became a tool, a tool for them not only to serve themselves and dishonor their parents, but also to condemn others as inferior and unclean.

And see, this is always what happens when we elevate human customs and traditions to dogmas that are higher and contrary to Scripture. We end up dehumanizing people because the motivation always goes rotten.

Jesus saw through the Pharisees' fake piety. This wasn't about preserving holiness, it was about preserving their status and their supremacy. Pharisee. And maybe up to this point you're thinking to yourself, well, I don't follow any religious traditions so this doesn't apply to me.

I'm no Pharisee. But don't you see, you don't have to be religious to be Pharisaical. And you don't have to be religious to use tradition as a way to try to clean yourself and distinguish yourself from unclean other people.

Every single one of us, whether we're religious or not, we're all trying to be clean according to some standard and we all commit ourselves to various traditions that we believe will help us to be clean. Why do we study and work so hard often at the expense of serving the church or our relationships with God or with other people in our lives?

[25 : 03] Why are we so obsessed with how we look? Why do we want to be so sleek and slim and young and beautiful following the tradition or program of this or that fitness or nutrition expert? We're trying to be clean.

We're trying to be clean and not only that, we're also trying to clean the world around us, aren't we? Another side of the coin is we're also trying to get rid of the uncleanness in ourselves and all around us.

Why do we harbor such malice or disgust toward those who live differently, think differently, vote differently than us? It's because they're unclean to us.

And maybe we're even trying to cleanse them. Maybe we're trying to make them more like us or maybe even get rid of them. I mean, this is what's happening all over the world on macro and micro levels.

Individuals and whole people groups claiming to be clean because they live by a certain code and based on their deeply ingrained way of life, based on their tradition, those who don't live their way are deemed as unclean.

[26 : 04] This is the root of every person-to-person malice and disrespect and it's the same root that leads to genocide. People believing they're clean because they live up to their own traditions and hating or even seeking to cleanse this world of those who are unclean according to these same made-up traditions that are not of God.

This is what happens when tradition is elevated to ultimate authority. In the name of this ultimate authority, people believe they have the right to make ultimate declarations and judgments upon others.

This is what happens in every instance of human-constructed discipleship. This presumptuous sense of authority and self-serving pietism always resulting in war and conflict and hatred and dehumanization and violence because all these evils find justification from these man-made, made-up traditions that people cling to in order to purify themselves and convince themselves that they are better than others who need to be cleansed out of this world.

So don't you see? Like us all, the Pharisees weren't really about being clean God's way. They were merely preoccupied with their own contrived self-cleansing, world-cleansing projects.

And when you see it this way, that they were elevating their tradition above God's commands and weaponizing their tradition to keep themselves in the clean category and judge others, you begin to see that whereas we tend to think of Pharisees as these religious extremists who took God's holiness and purity too seriously, no, the problem, the problem was actually that they weren't taking it seriously enough.

[27 : 49] By living according to their own tradition above God's law, excuse me, by setting their own standard of cleanness, one which they could pass and yet they knew others could not pass, they were actually adjusting the goalposts and just making it suit their own strengths and preferences.

They were making God's holy standards achievable. They were saying perfection was possible so long as you change and copy them externally. But this leads me to the last and most important problem that Jesus perceives in the Pharisees, it's their hearts.

Look with me at verse 6. 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.

Jesus is saying that just because you do this supposedly pious religious act, it doesn't mean your heart is in the right place. You can say and think you're honoring me but your hearts can be far, far, far from me.

This is a word for us, Christ Church. In this season where we're pursuing discipleship, pursuing a particular way of following Jesus in this season where we're promoting spiritual disciplines where we have scripture reading plans and prayer vigils and all these things that we promote.

[29 : 06] Worship plus three. We want you to be here in corporate worship. We want you to be serving in this church. We want you to have a touch point with this community outside of Sundays and we want you to be in some kind of discipleship relationship where there's spiritual responsibility.

Jesus will remind us that you can do worship plus three here but your heart can still be far from God. Your heart can still be far from God and this should be sobering to all of us.

I've caught my own self in this in this past month and a half. You know, I love Tim Keller. He's one of my heroes and I read on Twitter that his scripture reading plan was the McShane plan plus the Book of Common Prayers Psalms.

So he would read the Old Testament once a year, the New Testament twice in one year and he would read the Psalms once a month. So 12 times a year. So I've been on that.

All right? And I'm not better for it. I'll tell you that. I thought to myself, maybe if I just follow this tradition, maybe if I just follow this formula, I'll be the godly, wise, compelling pastor that Tim Keller was.

[30 : 07] Maybe that's the way to greatness. But honestly, on more days than not, I'm just flying through this. No idea what I'm reading. Just to cross it off, my spiritual to-do list.

Honoring God with my spiritual checklist, with my heart far from him. And yes, it's important. These holy habits that we're trying to instill in our church.

It's important to try on these various traditions. But at the end of the day, how are our hearts? How are our hearts? Are they near to or far from Jesus?

At the very end of the day, that's what Jesus is after. He's after our hearts, not just our hands, not just our heads, but our hearts from which everything flows, he says. And maybe to some of you, this sounds like a relief.

Like, phew, good. I could never keep up the demands of Scripture, but at least I have a good heart. If that's what you're thinking right now, Jesus has something else to say to you. Verse 14, listen to me, everyone, and understand this.

[31 : 15] Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Not even Tim Keller's Scripture reading plan. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.

I'm going to skip to verse 21. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come. And he lists all those different kinds that we're all guilty of.

All these evils come from inside and defile a person. Thus saith the Lord Jesus. When Jesus said this, it wasn't supposed to be a relief to us.

What Jesus was saying was that the Pharisees and anyone who would seek to be clean, anyone who would seek to clean themselves by external means, yo, we're in trouble. That's our method.

Because the problem isn't primarily outside of us as though we're simply victims of sin with uncleanness coming at us from the outside to infect us. No, evil doesn't just come at us from the outside.

[32 : 16] More importantly, Jesus says, it comes from within us, from the inside. And this is why no external religious tradition will do to make us clean.

We have an internal problem, a heart problem, every single one of us. And so the question is, well then how do we fix that? How do we get clean hearts? Especially if we can't clean ourselves from the outside.

Has anyone here ever tried to change their heart, change their will? How'd that turn out for you? And what's even more troubling here is that here in Mark 7, Jesus just ends, that's where the passage ends for us today.

He lets us linger in this hard news that the problem is our hearts. And he doesn't give us an answer here for what to do about it. But if you think about it, if you think about it, this message that the problem is our hearts, this is at the same time both the bad news and the good news of the gospel.

That we cannot clean ourselves and yet that we don't need to clean ourselves because there's a gracious God who can and who will if we trust him.

[33 : 35] The Pharisees tried oh so hard to cleanse themselves through tradition and rule following because they wanted to avoid another exile and we are all trying so hard ourselves, right, to avoid all kinds of uncleanness because we want to avoid all kinds of exiles as well.

And the truth is we're all exhausted, aren't we? Trying to live up to all these different standards and it's not making us live, it's not making us, it's not likely life-giving for us, it's not making us compassionate or even clean people and we still feel the threat of exile every day, don't we?

But you know the prophet Ezekiel, he said something to unclean Israel after they'd gone into exile, after they'd made themselves unclean by disregarding the law of God.

The word of God still came to them even though they never deserved it and it was a gracious word. through the prophet Ezekiel, God said to these unclean people in exile, he said, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean.

I will cleanse you from your impurities. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

[35 : 03] And you see, this is the gospel. This is the gospel that Jesus was hinting at by pointing them to the problem of their hearts that while we could never clean ourselves, God can and will to and plan to to clean his beloved people who just trust him by faith and not in some quick, easy, inexpensive, uncostly way.

No. At the cost of his son. The blood of his son on a cross for us with his priceless, innocent blood bearing our curse, bearing our sins, bearing our uncleanness, going on a cross, becoming unclean, being covered in spit and hate and curse to the place of unclean death so that we might be clean, so that we might become the righteousness of God.

And this is the gospel. This is the gospel and this gospel is the inexhaustible fuel for the discipleship that we're seeking here at Christ Church, the inexhaustible fuel for the discipleship that Jesus calls us to.

So different than any other kind of discipleship that anyone else could offer. We are invited to follow a master who exists not to forever command us do, do, do, do, do, do.

No. We're inviolate. We're invited to follow a king who said from his cross, it is done. That is what the core of discipleship is about.

[36 : 41] Yes, it's about following Jesus. Yes, it's about obedience. But we love because he first loved us. We deny ourselves and we take up our cross following the Savior who took up his cross first for us.

Will you pray with me? Lord, we want to follow Jesus.

He is a better king and we thank you that he has said it is done. In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.