

Jesus and the Bible

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[0 : 00] What gets you in and what gets you out? You see, back in the day, I remember that crocs were all the trend.

They were all arranged. You'd wear socks with crocs. And the thing is, for me, crocs made you out. Crocs weren't cool. Bourbon socks were easy.

You'll see me a lot of the time wearing Bourbon socks. In fact, I heard someone ask their parent recently, and that's a new shoe. It got to the point where, even today, I was at another youth group preaching, and I was talking about crocs and how old they were, and everyone looked at the person, and they were like, crocs are the best thing because crocs are in acrimony.

I remember when I was wearing puffy jackets, my friends said that I did not look cool. And it was only something that old people would wear.

But guess what? Crocs are in, and so are puffy jackets. It's what the young adults have been wearing for the last decade. You see, in today's passage, the Pharisees are about who is in and who is out.

[1 : 15] The Pharisees were so caught up in whether people were clean, holy by their standards, and the people who were in were the people who were clean and following their religious and cultural traditions.

And the people who weren't clean were out. During this period, the Pharisees were seen as the most holy people, the ones who knew God and went above and beyond to follow his law, to adhere to these cleanliness customs.

You would be of the same level of the Pharisees. So why wouldn't you keep these customs? Well, in this passage, the Pharisees have observed that Jesus and his disciples were not practicing these Jewish religious traditions, and they tried to trap him.

So for today's sermon, you can open up to the St. Paul's app, or you can write four points that will follow along our sermon. Number one, the trap. Number two, Jesus' correction.

Number three, what is our trap? And number four, what is Jesus' solution? Well, number one, the trap. Let's look exactly what is going on in verse one.

[2 : 24] Have your Bibles open. It says, 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. Now, Mark goes further. He writes some little backstory for his initial audience, who most likely were non-Jews and were unfamiliar with these customs.

It was just what the Jews did. It says in verse three, The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.

And 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. What Mark is doing here is helping us understand that the tradition Jesus and his disciples were breaking were not from God's word.

When you read the Bible, often you'll see little letters that refer to footnotes. And in these footnotes, you'll see other Bible references when a quote or an idea relates to other Bible passages.

[3 : 34] And that's actually to encourage us to actually get some context and to see how the Bible is unified in its message. In here, notice that there are no references to other texts, no references to biblical laws.

In other words, what the Pharisees were actually catching Jesus on were things from man and not from God. They added a blanket rule on what it meant to be God's people, but not listen to God's word himself.

The term in verse three, the tradition of the elders, refers to Jewish traditions passed on from generation to generation from the authority of each teacher of the law. That has become their authority.

In other instances, this term would refer to not a tradition that's passed on, but what the authoritative contemporary Pharisees held.

But it is not the authority of God. It's why we are in this series, because we believe that the Bible is God's word, that it is ultimate authority.

[4 : 46] It is trustworthy and necessary. It's clear and final. And we're encouraged to go deeper into God's word to submit to God's authority. And what the Pharisees are really doing is like us making a policy book here at St. Paul's and say that the people who are in are only people who wear summer clothing in winter at church or only have cold showers.

We already know that I will probably win one of those. Sometimes we might link it to, oh, it's because we want to be uncomfortable to know that our comfort truly is in Jesus.

Guess what? That is not a policy that we have here. And that would be a man-made thing. The original intention of this cultural custom was that they recognize that God cared about cleanliness. But boy, did they get it wrong. So how does Jesus correct them? Jesus answers two questions we might have for the text. Number one, where did the Pharisees go wrong?

And then number two, how then are we in? How then are we made clean? So where did the Pharisees go wrong? Jesus corrects them in verse six to eight.

[6 : 00] He replied, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, hypocrites. As it is written, these people honour 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. Jesus, who loves God's word, he knows it.

He uses it as a defence against temptation. He recognises that the Pharisees are those who want the identity of being godly and religious. And he noticed how he characterises the Pharisees, the lip service, the vain worship.

They're just holding on to human traditions. And it characterises them as those of the world and of themselves. And it is as if these external observances are what makes them God's people.

In fact, Jesus later makes it known in verse nine to 13 that it's not just clinging to human tradition as the problem, but in fact, their human traditions, the things that they're putting their pride in, make it actually impossible to follow God's word.

[7 : 13] Verse 13, that they in fact nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And this is not the only time they do so.

Cleanliness by God's standards, being in with the crowd of God, has never been about how you look, never been about the food you consume.

God, from the very beginning, has always been about the heart. 1 Samuel 16 verse 7 tells us this. Although man might look to the external, the Lord looks into the heart.

And Jesus says later in verse 15, nothing outside of the person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of the person that defiles them.

For later in verse 20, he says that the things, that the unclean things that come out of a person, comes from an unclean heart. We're in MasterChef season right now, and I hope you're watching because it's just amazing.

[8 : 19] But there are so many times when contestants cook things and the judge finds the tiniest thing to go on and say, nah, I can't eat it at all. There might be a raw component, maybe there's a speck of dirt.

If you didn't know, I didn't know because I eat it. Shock horror. In a prawn, there is an excrement vein in them. And you can see the judge's refusal to eat in their faces.

They're just like pulling divisively, oh, there's this thing, therefore I can't eat it. But we need a solution to our unclean heart.

Any little bit is unacceptable to God because he's perfect, he's pure. We can't just do more clean things. It's already unclean.

It's useless washing our hands. Once it's made dirty, it's unacceptable. But the transformed heart is something that God promises his people way back in the Old Testament.

[9 : 19] He promises in Ezekiel 36, 26, that one day he will give them a new heart, a new spirit. The hope for us comes in Hebrews 10.

The writer talks about Old Testament sacrifices and their purpose before Jesus. It was the way to be made right with God, but by Christ's sacrifice on the cross, verse 22 is our battle song against our unclean hearts.

It says, Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Faith in Christ makes us in. Faith in Christ purifies our heart. Friends, it is possible that we fall into the Pharisees trap too.

We too can fall for human traditions or we might even distort truths of God's word or even his gospel and deceive ourselves like the Pharisees.

[10 : 29] We may not collectively do that as a church. We don't require scribal traditions or have an additional law book. However, we have some subsumed ideologies for our culture that we put as a priority or even some self-talk that diminish the reality of the gospel in our lives.

An awesome kids ministry Bible teacher named Jack Klumpenhower puts it this way. Take this torch light on the screen. Imagine this torch is someone who's discovered God's light.

The beam of light will point to two things. Number one, the glory of God, his holiness. Number two, the knowledge of sin, missing the mark of his glory in the law.

And that's how we start our journey as followers of Jesus, right? We discover the wonder of Christ and the glory of God. Wow, there's something about him that's so cool. But we also have the spirit who convicts us of our sin and we recognise our sinfulness.

When a person becomes a Christian, they discover that what bridges the gap is the gospel. The gospel reconciles the two ends of the spectrum of God's holiness and our sin.

[11 : 51] And when we grow in our faith, we discover more about God and we realise our imperfections even more. So the beam widens and so we have a gap in our faith.

And if our understanding of the totality of Christ's accomplishment and the cross does not grow alongside this, we will fill these gaps with anything else. We'll fill it with things of this world, or we'll say things to ourselves like, if our knowledge and love of the gospel hasn't grown, we will fill the gap to reach the holy standard of God.

Well, all that matters is that I personally think that I have a good heart or I'm doing my bit for society. I'm not perfect, but surely God recognises that I'm serving, that I'm coming to church.

Surely God is good with my little obedience or following all the Bible is impossible. In other words, we lower God's standard or make less of the creator of the universe.

I know I have done that. But we will also fill the gap when we realise that our sin is way too deep. You might say or think that I just need to hide my sin from others or I might look like a good Christian to others and surely that will be okay.

[13 : 24] Maybe we get defensive when we are called out on our sin. Maybe my sin isn't so horrible. And in these situations, you and I fall in the same trap as the Pharisees.

We've made it about man and not about God. See, the only solution is when the gospel grows alongside our understanding of God's law and our sin.

Last week, we were reminded by John that we are all on the journey as Bible students. And naturally, what will happen is we will realise that God is so gracious, glorious and merciful.

Remember that the only solution, rather than be ashamed in your sin or hide from God, is when the cross grows alongside everything else. The gospel makes you ever more certain about your status being forgiven, adopted and totally accepted.

You'll no longer fall into legalism or be given into yourself, free licence to live your own way. It's the grace that keeps on giving. Because Jesus himself valued God's word.

[14 : 33] He affirms it all. He doesn't ignore it. He doesn't say, don't worry about the Old Testament. Steve pointed to us early in the series that Jesus in Luke 24, 27 says that the whole scriptures point to himself.

Every single story we read from the Old Testament, the law, the prophets, the songs, they are filled with God's glory and his promises for his people. And friend, for you, they have never been more true, more realised, better than ever in Jesus.

When you read Psalm 32 about how God is our hiding place in tribulation, you recall to how Colossians 3, 3 says that our hiding place is in Jesus.

It's even easy for me to get confused about a book like Leviticus when it's talking about sacrifices, worship. But you recall to mind, the core of the gospel is that Jesus is our Passover lamb who was sacrificed, who took away the sin of the world.

When you come across the pages about David and Goliath, you don't go and read that God will help you against your impossible giants. No, you look to Jesus. The pioneer and perfecter of your faith who says that even though you can never reach the glory of God on your own, Luke 18, 27 says directly to that matter that nothing is impossible for God and through Jesus, you can receive forgiveness and freedom that was seemingly impossible.

[16:05] But the gospel does not just have the power to change your Bible reading, but in every high and low of your life. See, what the gospel does is make the law not a bar that we can attain because we've established already what makes us clean is the blood of Jesus.

What the gospel does, it makes us look to Jesus even in our life. The law is no longer a means to be legalistic and tick a box, but one that is aspirational, that by the Holy Spirit, you are becoming more like Jesus.

For example, if I'm in a perpetual state of people pleasing, my boss, my family, my parents, but I know that Jesus is my saviour, I have an audience of one.

I live to worship the Lord knowing he already deeply affirms me because I am his child. If you're a parent who feels like you need to be striving harder and harder for your child's happiness or for their achievement, hit the brakes.

Know that your value doesn't come from being class parent of the year, but that you are loved as a child of God. If you're making a priority to nurture a home for your kids to know and love Jesus, you are already doing what God calls you to do as a parent.

[17:21] And this is regardless of whether your child trusts in Jesus at the end. That is God's work, not yours. If you're single and want to be married, married is a wonderful gift.

It is right to be desired. But marriage isn't your solution. The gospel solution is knowing that in Jesus, you are never alone. For the spirit that rose Jesus Christ from the dead is in you and that your marital status now reflects the marital status of all Christians in eternity.

That we will all be single. Those who are married right now will all be single in eternity, solely committed to God. When you look at your own sin and keep wondering why you aren't changing and you feel like, maybe God's forgotten about me.

No, he hasn't. For Jesus became defiled by your sin so that you might have a clean heart, so that you can be confident in the promise of Philippians that God is doing a good work in you and will carry it to completion when Jesus returns.

Friends, the gospel is gold for all. Do you see how every narrative in the Bible, old and new, familiar and foreign, they weave in together and it all converges to the climax of the cross.

[18:43] Every story, longing, triumph and problem in your life is and can be met and fulfilled in Jesus. As we've been opening the Bible, we've seen that it commands us to value the scriptures as God's authoritative word.

To not just glance at it and be ready to gaze, but be ready to gaze at God's grace and glory. So what I want us to do is to consider some questions for both our life and times we read the Bible. Number one, when it comes to your Bible reading, here are three really simple questions to help you every time you read. Number one, what is God doing for his people in this story?

Number two, how does he do the same for us but better in Jesus? Number three, how does believing this change how we live?

And here are three questions to reflect on your own about your life. What is the deepest longing in your life you wish to be resolved? How does Jesus address the deepest longing in the gospel?

[19:57] What from God's word brings you this comfort? I want to give you a few moments to jot down right now these questions. Maybe just answer the first question and get your calendars out to reflect on how the gospel is the solution to your deepest need.

Take a photo of the screen but if your heart has been stirred, do something. I would hate for us to be like the man who looks in the mirror then forgets what he looks like.

I'll pray in a bit. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that the pinnacle of scripture aligns our hearts to see the gospel clearer.

We thank you for Christ crucified. We thank you for the risen Lord Jesus that in trusting in him we have a gospel that does not just have the power to save but to change. We pray that we might trust you as the one who changes hearts. We know we cannot. So Lord, give us your spirit to renew us and renew the joy of our salvation but we pray as well that you might give us a new heart, a clean and contrite heart.
[21 : 17] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.