

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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Sermon title: The Pharisees, Men To Be Pitied, Mark 7:1-23

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**INTRODUCTION:** I have two main points I want to make in my message today:

1. Jesus confronted the arrogance of the Pharisees.
2. Jesus confronted the inconsistent thinking of the Pharisees.

**First, JESUS CONFRONTED THE ARROGANCE OF THE PHARISEES.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 7:1-8 <sup>1</sup>*The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus* <sup>2</sup>*and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.* <sup>3</sup>*(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.* <sup>4</sup>*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.*

<sup>5</sup>*So the Pharisees and 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?”*

<sup>6</sup>*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.*

<sup>7</sup>*They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’*

<sup>8</sup>*You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”*

**EXPLANATION:** Let me explain this passage a little bit. We don’t have time to look at it in detail, so maybe we can look at it again another time.

You may grow weary hearing me talk about the Old Testament laws and the additional laws people added during the Old Testament days. But, it's hard not to bring it up because this information is so relevant in order to have a proper understanding of the New Testament scriptures.

It's good to remind ourselves frequently what life was like under the Law of Moses and the additional laws created by people. It's good to remind ourselves of the freedom we have in Christ because people tend to put themselves under a man-made set of laws that have nothing to do with being a follower of Christ.

Jesus ate with his disciples, and the Pharisees pointed out they were not properly prepared to eat. In their case, it was considered sinful not to be prepared. Before we eat today, we may wash our hands, but if we don't, it's not considered a sin. We may have particular manners when we have company that we don't use when we eat alone, but in this day, people were expected to follow all the rules all the time. If they didn't, it was considered sinful.

**TRUTH:** Listen to this truth. The Pharisees were masters of missing the point. Here they were, talking with Jesus himself, and yet, they questioned whether he was following the Law. Here were the disciples enjoying a meal with Jesus. They weren't concerned with the religious laws because they were with Jesus, the one who fulfilled the Law and nullified it. Spiritually speaking, Jesus and the disciples passed them up. They were enjoying a whole new way of living.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Some of you know I've been in several bike-a-thons. None of these were races. They were all bike-a-thons to raise money for my favorite charities. It's interesting to see the different types of people who ride in these events. There are always some bike riders who have the expensive clothing and expensive racing bikes. Most of those folks are very fit, lean, all muscle, and they ride often. They see every ride as a race and a challenge to beat everyone. Even when the announcer says it's not a race, these people see it as a race anyway.

Sometimes in these bike-a-thons something happens which cannot be explained. Here's the best way for me to explain it. Mr. Fit and Trim pushes those pedals on his expensive lightweight bike with all his might. He's impressive. He's making great time. And, then out of nowhere, some person, who looks like the Shoney's

Big Boy just finishing a double cheeseburger, passes him up. And, he's riding an ordinary, heavy bicycle.

You see, perceived fitness is not always an accurate sign of real fitness.

**APPLICATION:** Here's the application. The Pharisees had the appearance of being spiritually fit. They followed all the rules. In fact, they had them memorized. They lived day and night by the rules. They gloried in following the rules. But, they were not spiritually fit. They were spiritually arrogant.

As a believer, I caution you not to compare your spiritual fitness with anyone else. Because:

- Just when you think you've arrived somewhere special,
- Just when you refined your spiritual self to being that lean, awesome looking spiritual man or woman of God,
- Just when you think it's safe,
- Just when you think you've made the grade with God,
- Just when you think you're going to get that promotion at work because God, owes it to you for being such a good Christian...

Here's what's going to happen...the Shoney's Big Boy is going to pass you up. He's going to get that promotion, and you are not. And, you'll spend your time reeling over how in the world God chose him instead of you.

Don't think of yourself as more spiritual or less spiritual than someone else. Avoid spiritual pride. Last Wednesday night, I reminded everyone we are all broken in some way, all of us. None of us are righteous on our own accord, no not one.

It seems human nature to try to add things to our salvation experience because we feel this innate need to do something for ourselves in the spiritual realm. For some reason, we feel the atoning work of Jesus is just not enough. Surely, there is something we can do for ourselves in the spiritual realm. Surely, we can do something to earn the salvation Jesus provides. If that's the way you think and live, you'll have a life of misery. Either that, or you'll deceive yourself into living a

life of spiritual arrogance that impresses Jesus no more than the Pharisees did right here in Mark 7.

Not only did Jesus confront the arrogance of the Pharisees—

## **Second, JESUS CONFRONTED THE INCONSISTENT THINKING OF THE PHARISEES.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 7:9-19 <sup>9</sup> *And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!”* <sup>10</sup> *For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’* <sup>11</sup> *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) —* <sup>12</sup> *then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.* <sup>13</sup> *Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”*

<sup>14</sup> *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.”* <sup>[16]</sup> *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*

<sup>17</sup> *After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.* <sup>18</sup> *“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.)

**EXPLANATION:** Right here, Jesus settled a lot of things. He regularly pointed out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

**ILLUSTRATION:** The Hebrew word “corban” in verse 11 references an Old Testament word for “things that were dedicated for the exclusive use of the temple.” I thought of the best way to explain this, and here’s what came to mind. Let’s say the church dedicated our busses to only transport people to and from Sunday School. Now, let’s say a bus from another church several hours away is full of people headed to the airport, and it breaks down in front of our church. Let’s say

the driver asks us to give them and their luggage a lift to the airport because they are leaving on a mission trip. Most people would be glad to accommodate their request, but if there was a Pharisee in the midst, he might say, “We cannot help them because we dedicated these busses for the sole purpose of only transporting people to and from Sunday School.”

**EXPLANATION:** Now, in the Old Testament, if something had been dedicated to the temple, it could be used for no other purpose. People would have rather died than to use something dedicated to the temple.

Jesus pointed out the Pharisees reasoning. You can study that more if you like, but I want to move on.

In this scripture, Jesus made all ceremonial food laws obsolete. He made it clear what you eat or do not eat does not defile you, nor in the same manner of speaking, does eating any particular foods make you holy.

**ILLUSTRATION:** The study of nutrition and the science of how the body works helps us understand there are foods that are not good for us and foods that are helpful to us. Yesterday, there was an article in *USA Today* about the oldest living person in the world. She is one hundred seventeen years old, and her diet defies science. She eats very little fruits and vegetables. Another woman, who is over one hundred, said the secret to her long life is drinking Dr. Pepper. She says her doctors tell her it is going to kill her, but she said they keep dying and she keeps drinking Dr. Pepper.

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 7:20-23 <sup>20</sup> *He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”*

**EXPLANATION:** The people had all but lost the meaning behind the ceremonial laws. They were eating right according to the Law, but they were sinning outwardly in their actions. Then Jesus set the record straight by reversing what people were practicing.

Jesus started with heavy sins and moved down the list. Can't you see the crowd going through the checklist in their minds?

Sexual immorality – “I've never done that.”

Theft – “I've never done that.”

Murder – “I've never done that.”

Adultery – “I've never done that.”

Greed – “Well, let's not talk about that.”

Deceit – “Only once. And, when I was a child!”

Lewdness – “I've never been lewd.”

Envy – “Well, there was that time...”

And, then he concludes with slander, arrogance, and folly. Jesus listed folly with murder. He listed envy with sexual immorality. In other words, sin is sin.

I know what I am about to say here is unsettling to some people. Dietary laws and nutrition have nothing to do with securing your place in heaven. Being a good person, following all laws, being honest in all your dealings, helping the poor, feeding the homeless, and any other virtue you can think of—none of these have anything to do with securing your place in heaven.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Once, when I was preaching through Galatians, I hammered down on the false security of self-earned salvation through goodness and following the rules. A man came to my office really upset. You see, the scripture wrecked his world. He was an uptight man, smug in his self-assured self-righteousness. He thought all the things he had done and was doing was in some way helping earn his salvation or giving him some type of bonus points.

**TRUTH:** Folks, listen to me. It's Jesus and nothing else. Anything you think you've done to earn favor with God outside of repenting of sin and trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior is misguided thought.

Resolving Jesus paid it all and there is nothing we can go to earn our salvation is freeing.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 4:12 tells us *“there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved.”*

**CONCLUSION:** Earlier, I told you the title of the message was “The Pharisees, Men To Be Pitied.” No one really felt sorry for the Pharisees, so there is some sick humor tied to the title. But, they were indeed men to be pitied because... they completely missed the point. If they had only realized Jesus was the Messiah, they could have enjoyed a meal with him and his disciples. But no, they were more concerned with preserving the traditions of their forefathers than they were having fellowship with the Savior.

Some of you here today and some of you watching by TV have heard the truth and you resist because of the way you have always believed. I'm asking you to let go of that notion and follow Jesus. I am not asking you to follow me but to follow Jesus. Man's traditions will lead you nowhere but hell. Only Jesus will lead you to heaven.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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