

# True Worship

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- [ 0 : 00 ] Morning, everyone. I spoke to someone this morning. I won't name him, but he said, you know, if people fall asleep, that's okay too. Now, Dad, you're sitting up the front and I'll be looking at you.
- Now, have you ever thought you were doing everything right? You attend church regularly. You read your Bible. You say your prayers.
- You give to church. Attend Christian meetings. Jesus, only to realize you missed the point entirely. Well, that's exactly what happens with the Pharisees in Mark chapter 7.
- They thought they were worshipping God, but Jesus exposed their hearts. This morning, as we consider Mark chapter 7, verses 1 to 23, I want to put it to you that a true worship of God requires the inward transformation of the heart.
- The true worship of God requires the inward transformation of the heart. Let's pray. Oh, Father, please be at work in our hearts today.
- [ 1 : 14 ] Open our ears to hear the words of Jesus. Amen. So have you got your Bible there? Let's turn to Mark chapter 7, verse 1.
- Now, when the Pharisees gathered to him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.
- For the Pharisees and older Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.
- And there are many other traditions that are observed, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.
- And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?
- [ 2 : 26 ] And he said to them, Well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites? As it is written, This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.
- In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.
- And he said to them, You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition.
- For Moses said, Honour your father and your mother, and whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. But you say, If a man tells his father or his mother, Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban.
- That is, given to God, then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother. Thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.
- [ 3 : 40 ] And many such things you do. And he called the people to him again and said to them, Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him.

But the things that come out of a person are what defiled him. And we had entered the house and left the people. His disciples ask him about the parable.

And he said to them, Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart, but his stomach, and is expelled?

Thus he declared all foods clean. And he said, What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within and they defile a person. Now at the start of chapter 7 you see that Jesus has a confrontation with the Pharisees and the scribes.

[ 5 : 17 ] And it isn't the first time that this has happened. In Mark chapter 2 verse 16, when they saw Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

And then in chapter 2 verse 24, the Pharisees saw the disciples plucking heads of grain. And they said to Jesus, look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?

In chapter 3, the Pharisees watched Jesus closely to see if he would heal a man with a shriveled hand in a synagogue on the Sabbath.

Jesus asked them, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill? But they were silent.

Jesus was angry and grieved at their hardness of heart. He healed the man with a shriveled hand and then in verse 6, the Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him.

[ 6 : 29 ] How to destroy him. So by the time we reach this chapter, in chapter 7, this isn't just another disagreement. It's a full-on confrontation.

The Pharisees are determined to attack Jesus using the weight of human tradition against him and they are picking a fight with Jesus around ritual washing.

The command for priests to wash their hands and feet prior to entering the tabernacle was probably the foundation for the practice of ritual washing in Judaism.

For the Pharisees and scribes, this is about religious cleanliness. According to their interpretation of the Mosaic law and oral traditions, they insist on ritual washing not just the hands but the vessels that they use and even the couches that they lay on to maintain religious purity based on human tradition.

Jesus exposed the hypocrisy. So in verse 60 he says, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites as it is written, This people honours me with their lips but their heart is far from me.

[ 7 : 53 ] In vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. The core issue is that the Pharisees were obsessed with man-made rules.

that were more interested in outward religion rather than the inward reality. And Jesus sums it up by saying, You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.

And then he gives them an example of the way they have rejected the commandment of God to establish their tradition. In verse 10, for Moses said, Honour your father and your mother.

Whoever reviles his father or mother must surely die. But the Pharisees are now to say, If a man tells his father or mother, Whatever you would have gained from me is corbin, that is, given to God, then they no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother.

A corbin is an object that has been promised to the Lord. It was a loophole. When a person declared his property corbin to his parents, he neither promised it to the temple nor prohibited its use to himself.

[ 9 : 13 ] But he legally excludes his parents from its benefit. Now, that person softens his heart and decided to revoke his vow.

The scribes would forbid him from breaking his vow to help his father or mother. Jesus condemns them for nullifying God's word through their traditions.

And this wasn't the only example. There are detailed rules defining work on a Sabbath. For example, carrying objects beyond a certain distance was forbidden. Lighting of fire was prohibited.

Healing activities were restricted unless life-threatening. The Israelites were required to tithe a tenth for all their fields produced each year.

But the Pharisees extended this to tiny garden herbs like mint and dill and cumin. They were more interested in tithing minute herbs but neglected the weightier matter of the law, justice, mercy and faithfulness.

[ 10 : 30 ] It's always easy to see the sin in others, isn't it? But before we judge the Pharisees, are we any different?

Do we also mistake outward religion for true worship? Michael Reeves in his book *Evangelical Pharisees* has some helpful things to say to highlight these same attitudes exist in our churches today.

So in the outline there are four things there under outward religion. Our religion focuses on external rituals and traditions and one of the ways that we can do that is being a church regularly.

being regular at church doesn't necessarily mean that our hearts are right with God. You can show up every Sunday and remain unchanged inwardly.

If you miss a few services then I hope that someone will touch base with you. But according to the Pharisees if you're regular at church you'll be okay. You're here today maybe you've only been around a little while.

[ 11 : 45 ] Or maybe you've been attending church for years and some of you from birth. But let me ask you do you come out of habit out of duty?

Is it because your parents made you? Is it the thing that your family does every Sunday? Or because you desire to know Jesus and be more like him day by day?

We went to a church in Auckland a couple of years ago. Jen noticed that all the women were dressed in the same way. Long skirts, head coverings, long sleeved blouses and we walked in dressed as we usually do.

This is a typical example. And a lady came up to chat with Jen after the service. She wanted to know what type of church we attend and what we believe.

Jen said we attend a Bible believing church very much like yours. But a lady kept probing, making sure we are ticking all the right boxes that align with her view of church or Christian.

[ 13 : 03 ] have you ever looked at someone at church and thought a Christian wouldn't dress like that? A Christian wouldn't behave like that?

What does that reveal about our hearts? Too often we focus on external behaviours, church addendons, dress codes, etc. over heart transformation.

When was the last time you asked someone, how is your walk with Jesus? And when was the last time someone asked you? Our religion emphasises conformity over transformation.

If you are in a particular church, you tend to conform to specific cultural norms. If you are evangelical, you take the Bible seriously, and we do.

Your faith, maybe, tends to be an intellectual faith, rather than personal. If you're Pentecostal, you tend to be more expressive and spontaneous in worship, and place great emphasis on the work of the Spirit through tongues, prophecy, healing.

[ 14 : 23 ] God's church, God's God's God's gift to His church.

Now, that's a light dig, a gentle dig at ourselves. I think we can laugh at others, but I think sometimes it's helpful to look in the mirror and try to work out what are our blind spots.

Now, many churches, there is an expectation to conform. Use the same language, send kids to a Christian school, share identical beliefs.

Like the Pharisees, we create lists of do's and don'ts. If you're a Christian, you should read your Bible every day, pray every day, serve in your local church, be part of a Bible study.

Now, these become the benchmarks of measuring a person's faith. Rather than a deep and personal love for God, and a desire to honour him and walk in a manner worthy of him.

[ 15 : 39 ] Elwood religion also makes judgment based on outward appearances. We all know someone that seems to make the same mistake time and time again, a pattern of behaviour that gets them into trouble.

Do you get annoyed at them? I do with my children. Do you get frustrated with them? I do with my children. Do you resent that you have to pick up the pieces after them?

I do with my children. Now, shouldn't they reap what they sowed? Isn't it just what they deserved? have we looked in the mirror?

Haven't we failed over and over despite promising we wouldn't? Does God get annoyed, frustrated, and resentful towards us?

no. As a tender father, he knows that we are frail and weak. He has shown us grace and mercy that we do not deserve.

[ 16 : 52 ] Now, do you remember the parable of the unmerciful servant? Owed his master a huge sum of money. When he cannot repay, his master threatened to put him in prison.

he begged for mercy. His master took pity on him and forgave him his debt. As he went out, he met a fellow servant that owed him a little.

He choked him and demanded the money be paid back. When his master learned of him, he said, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me to and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you.

Jesus warns us against this in Matthew chapter 7 verse 1. Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged.

And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. brothers and sisters, we need God's grace and his help to see the log in our own eyes rather than the speck in others.

[ 18 : 19 ] Our religion breeds hypocrisy and self-righteousness. I find that when I ask another person, how are you going? The response is often, I am okay.

I'm sure that's your experience as well. I know that often I am not okay. I'm struggling with things whether at home with my wife or my children or something else.

But the default response is, I'm okay. I'm not open about my struggles but I can turn up and pretend as if everything is okay.

But underneath that facade everything is in turmoil. We put on a mask and that is the very heart of hypocrisy.

Brothers and sisters, are you too proud to let others in a little about your struggles? Or do you do so in despair? The psalmist often poured out their heart to God.

[ 19 : 33 ] Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why are you troubled within? Take it to the Lord. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

He is most able to minister to you in your struggles. He is able to lift your burden. Share your burden with another.

Find someone you trust. Find someone who is willing to listen and ask them to pray for you. We need help. We need one another to carry our struggles before the Lord.

If you're ever privileged enough for someone to share their struggles with you, do listen. Pray for them. Keep confidence.

Pray for wisdom before giving advice. At the start of the year I resolved to let the students know I am a Christian.

[ 20 : 41 ] I told them three things I wanted them to know about myself. firstly I am a Christian and to know Jesus and being known by him is the best thing that can happen to anyone.

Secondly I married and have three kids. Some of the students find that hard to believe. Why would anyone want to marry that grumpy old man? Thirdly I like fishing and not much luck with that either.

Now I then ask if they wanted to ask me any questions. One of the students put their hand up and asked what type of Christian are you?

If you were asked the same question what would you answer? What type of Christian are you?

Without a heartbeat without missing a heart beat I said not the happy clappy type with a pause I said well that is framing it in a negative way and then I said I'm a Bible believing Christian and that was the end of the conversation I have been reflecting on that when I said I'm not the happy clappy type of Christian I look down on my brothers and sisters who demonstrate their love for God outwardly enthusiastically we evangelicals just don't do that I'm in a Bible believing church where the Bible is taught and they are just caught up in emotions and who knows what it was uncharitable!

[ 22 : 39 ] and unkind it sprang from a proud heart in that moment I was the Pharisee saying God I thank you that I'm not like other men for weeks I knew something was off but I couldn't pinpoint it thankfully God revealed it to me it was pride wasn't it it was pride I thought I was humble but deep down I was proud that I'm not like them I don't get emotional I have more knowledge and I don't babble I was ashamed I confessed to God my pride for looking down on our brothers and sisters repented of that attitude have you ever had a moment like that where

God exposes something in your heart that you didn't even realize was lurking there maybe you think as a Christian I would never do that say that well you find it hard to accept someone because they are different they speak differently they think differently they have different convictions brothers and sisters pride can come from theological knowledge and can lead to looking down on others remember how God humbles the proud and lifts up the humble he sees and examines the heart not outward appearances maybe you have been on the receiving end of such attitudes maybe you have felt judged because you don't attend church regularly because of how you dressed because of how you speak remember

Jesus spent time with the tax collectors and sinners he's a friend to the lowly and downcast there's a hymn what a friend we have in Jesus there's a verse in there are we weak and heavy laden cumbered with a load of care precious saviour still our refuge do your friends despise forsake you in his arms he will take and shield you take heart take heart what truly matters is not how others see you but how Jesus sees you and he welcomes you with grace if you search your heart and found none of these pharisaic attitudes praise God for his work in you keep walking humbly with him if you feel the sting the conviction that these attitudes are reflections of your own heart then you would have grasped what

Jesus said in verse 21 so have a look with me for from within out of the heart of men come evil thoughts sexual immorality theft murder adultery coveting wickedness deceit sensuality envy slander pride foolishness now how accurate and correct was Jesus diagnosis of our heart the problem is not what is on the outside the problem is within now doesn't what naturally flow out of our heart contradict the commandments!

to love God with our whole heart mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves if you're married and you're faithful to your wife Jesus says anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart now some of us will say well we've never done that I've never committed the physical act and yet the things that we are exposed to on the screen are so often what we fail to look away from that's not just us that would be if you are a parent your children as well the moment you handed them a smartphone a device you just open the door for temptation to sin against

[ 28 : 07 ] God in that way God calls us to purity and it's on Ian's heart Ian just give us a wave down there to help men with sexual discipleship if you like some help even just have a conversation with Ian he'll be more than glad to he's just down there on the welcoming desk now you may not be a murderer I trust no one has ever committed murder here but Jesus said everyone who's angry with his brother will be liable to judgment just as the one who has committed murder when we are wronged our pride injured don't we just want to get back at the other person to pay back an eye for an eye tooth for tooth and some more have we never been envious of another person wishing if only we could have what they have that holiday that house the friends they have the social circles they move in the opportunities they get if you seriously examined your own heart you would grasp that your own heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick who can understand it we do not love

God with our whole heart mind and strength and we certainly do not love our neighbours as ourselves our corrupt evil heart gets in the way every time time and time again and Paul says in Romans chapter 7 for I do not do the good I want to do but the evil I do not want to do is what I keep on doing can our external practices cleanse our heart of its uncleanness can our good works make us acceptable to God Jesus says unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven what hope is there thanks be to

God he does for us what we cannot do for ourselves he cleanses and purifies our hearts so that we are acceptable to him you see what we need is not to try harder make more effort and strive more it is about yielding our hearts to God and allowing him to replace what is within with his grace and mercy he has promised to give us a new heart and he will remove the heart of stone he will write his law on our hearts so that we may love him with all our heart and all our soul we will fail we will fail but Jesus is ever gracious he has come not for the healthy but for the sick he has come to transform our heart circle back to the question that was asked of me what type of

Christian are you I wonder what your answer was what type of Christian are you upon reflection I don't think a Bible believing Christian was a satisfactory answer imagine imagine if you met Jesus face to face today and he asked you what type of Christian are you and you answered I'm a Bible believing Christian now do you think he'll be impressed with that I think when asked the same question again my answer would be one that live in and drink deeply of the mercy and grace of Jesus to immerse in God's unmerited favour grace and his boundless kindness mercy and allowing that to shape every aspect of my identity thoughts and actions to have his grace and mercy shape our ambition in life field our love for others and temper the way we handle conflict brothers and sisters can you see our worship of

God is not the outside in but inside out for true worship of God requires the inward transformation of our heart and that is the miracle that only Jesus can do for us the man who forgives sins calms the storm and heals the sick can so transform our heart and wipe clean all our misdeeds that we do not need to rely on our efforts live in and drink deeply of his grace and mercy today and day by day whenever we are tempted to rely on our efforts remember Jesus has freed us from the burden of trying to prove ourselves to lift ourselves up by our bootstraps rather

[ 34 : 17 ] Jesus empowers us to live lives of genuine love humility and joy by transforming our hearts replacing pride with humility anger with peace and immorality with self control above all he fills our heart with the love for God and love for others if God has already begun his work in you will you keep coming to him and let his grace and mercy shape your heart more and more each day and if you desire a new heart a heart transformed by Jesus will you ask him for that today do pray with me our heavenly father the words of

Jesus revealed what is truly in our heart out of it flowed all sorts of evil and wickedness by our own efforts we cannot be accepted by you please transform our heart to live in your grace and drink deeply of your mercy day by day amen