

Concord Community Church

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When Tradition Replaces Truth

Text: Mark 7:1–13 “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.” (Mark 7:8)

Introduction: Traditions are not necessarily bad. They can help preserve good values, strengthen families, and provide order in church life. However, when traditions are elevated above the Word of God, they become spiritually dangerous.

Jesus repeatedly confronted religious leaders, not because they had traditions, but because their traditions contradicted, obscured, or replaced God's commands. The question for every believer and church is:

“Are we following Christ and His Word, or are we merely preserving human traditions?”

1. Jesus Condemned Traditions That Nullified God's Word

Mark 7:6-8 The Pharisees carefully observed ceremonial washing rituals and other religious customs yet neglected the heart of God's commandments.

Jesus said: “They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.” (Mark 7:7)

Principle: Whenever human traditions are given greater authority than Scripture, true worship is corrupted.

2. The Corban Tradition: Religion Without Obedience

Mark 7:9-13 God commanded: “Honor your father and mother.” (Exodus 20:12)

Yet the Pharisees allowed people to dedicate their possessions to God ("Corban") and thereby avoid supporting their parents.

Their tradition provided a religious excuse for disobedience.

Jesus declared: “You nullify the word of God by your tradition.”

Principle: No tradition is acceptable if it causes us to ignore God's clear commands.

3. Biblical Examples of Wrong Traditions

A. The Bronze Serpent Became an Idol

Numbers 21:8-9; 2 Kings 18:4

What God originally used for blessing later became an object of worship.

King Hezekiah destroyed it.

Lesson: Even good things become dangerous when they replace devotion to God.

B. Religious Festivals Without Righteous Living- Isaiah 1:13-17

Israel faithfully observed religious ceremonies, but their hearts were far from God.

God rejected their worship.

Lesson: God desires obedience more than rituals.

C. Loving Human Approval More Than God's Approval

John 12:42-43- Many believed in Jesus but refused to follow Him openly because they feared public opinion.

Lesson: Tradition often survives because people fear change more than they fear God.

4. Modern-Day Examples

- **“We've always done it this way.”** Church traditions can sometimes become more important than biblical mission.
- **Ritual Without Relationship.** Attending services, reciting prayers, or participating in ceremonies cannot replace a personal relationship with Christ.
- **Human Rules Added to God's Word.** Legalistic requirements regarding appearance, culture, or personal preferences should never be elevated to the level of Scripture.

Colossians 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through human tradition rather than on Christ.”

5. How Do We Test Every Tradition?

Ask four questions: **1. Is it supported by Scripture? See Acts 17:11**

2. Does it glorify Christ? Colossians 3:17

3. Does it promote obedience to God? John 14:15

4. Does it help advance the Gospel?

1 Corinthians 9:22-23 If a tradition fails these tests, it should be reconsidered.

6. Not All Traditions Are Wrong

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Paul encouraged believers to hold firmly to apostolic teachings.

Good traditions:

- Encourage biblical worship
- Preserve sound doctrine
- Strengthen discipleship
- Point people to Christ

The issue is not tradition itself. The issue is whether tradition submits to Scripture.

Conclusion

The Pharisees knew their traditions, but they missed their Messiah.

Jesus never said, “Follow tradition.” He said, “Follow Me.” (Matthew 16:24)

Therefore: * Respect helpful traditions. * Reject unbiblical traditions. * Test everything by Scripture. * Keep Christ at the center.

Closing Challenge: Tradition is valuable when it supports God's Word. It becomes dangerous when it replaces God's Word.

Let us be a people who say:

“Where Scripture speaks, we obey. Where Scripture is silent, traditions must never become our master.”

Closing Scripture- Mark 7:13

“Thus, you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.”

May we always choose God's truth over human tradition, and Christ's authority over man's customs. Amen.