

Meet Jesus: As he exposes false religion

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[0 : 00] So we're continuing our series from Mark's Gospel. You might like to turn it up in the Bibles. It's page 842 in the Visitor's Bibles. 842.

We'll be reading from chapter 6, verse 53. Chapter 6, verse 53. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.

And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him, that is Jesus, and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on beds to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that he might touch even the fringe of his garment.

And as many as touched it were made well. 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.

[1 : 03] For the Pharisees and all the 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 they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches. And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?

And he said to them, Well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites? As it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

You leave the commandments 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, Honor 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 korban, 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.

[2 : 29] And many such things you do, says Jesus. So, our series from Mark's Gospel is called Meet Jesus.

And we're going to look at three encounters with Jesus today. We're going to look at him interacting with three groups of people. First of all, the general public.

Secondly, the Pharisees. And then thirdly, the disciples. Our first point is the passion of the general public from verses 53 to 56 of chapter 6.

I wonder if you've ever met anybody famous. You know, got up close to them. I remember, it might be two years ago.

I'm not sure exactly. I saw Roald Harris on television painting a portrait of the Queen. Don't know if you saw it. But he seemed quite relaxed in royal presence. He seemed quite comfortable and at home in that sort of environment.

[3 : 38] When I was a boy, I used to go to motorcycle race meetings. And this is a sign of my age. I used to collect autographs of the superstars in those days.

Giacomo Agostini, an Italian world champion. Phil Reid. A couple of times I've waited outside of caravans waiting for these stars to appear and to get their autographs.

But I'd like you to notice the reaction of the general public to Jesus. And it's not what we might expect. Just have a look down there.

Chapter 6, verse 53. When they, that is Jesus and his disciples, had crossed over the Lake of Galilee, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.

And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him. And we expect them to run to Jesus. At least I expected that, you know, like iron filings to a magnet.

[4 : 42] But no, they do the opposite. They dispersed, verse 55. And they ran about the whole region and began to bring back the sick on their beds to wherever they heard he was.

So it's not the cult of fame, is it? Really. But the needs of the sick that are motivating the actions here of these folk.

Let's just think about this for a minute. You know, when someone visits the planet and they have complete, absolute control over the climatic systems, over the health of humankind, over the spiritual realm, you know, when all that's going on, well, this person obviously has potential to help people personally.

Think about it. He's not like a pop star. A pop star can't give sight to the blind. A pop star can't forgive sin. So they recognise him, don't they?

They recognise Jesus. And he personally, they know, can resolve the most profound things of life. And so what do they do?

[5 : 54] They're running about the whole region, verse 55 says Mark. They sort of suddenly disperse like spilt ink on a desk. They're going out.

They're going outwards. And who wouldn't? Who wouldn't bring a sick friend to this Jesus here? Who wouldn't want their mother or their father healed of some terminal illness?

Imagine a blind beggar on a street corner. He's sat there for many years of his life. He can hear a commotion. He hears the word healing. His ears prick up.

His heart jumps. But he begins to think about it. He remembers that he's got no eyes left to heal. He'd cry if he could.

And then suddenly there's a warm hand pulling him up. He can't see but he knows how to run.

They're running back to the focus point. Back to Jesus. They're just like the friends of the paralytic, aren't they?

[6 : 54] These people bringing the sick to Jesus. Do you remember when they were lowering the paralytic down through the roof to get to Jesus? They bring the sick for healing. Just look there at verse 56.

Look at the verbs here. And wherever he came in villages, cities, or countryside they laid the sick in the marketplace and implored him that he might touch even the fringe of his garment.

And as many as touched were made well. How much more passion, friends, ought we to have? Think about it.

For it's not temporary healing which is the focus of our Bible but eternal life. Do you see? I wonder if we love our neighbours as ourselves.

These folk here do, don't they? The general public around Gennesaret. It's like we should see who we've got in the Bible. It's like we should see Jesus Christ and be running out and urging our friends to come and meet him.

[8 : 01] Think about this. Just run it through your thinking. It's very priestly, isn't it? Do you see? What are they doing? They're going out and about and they're bringing people back to who?

Their creator. Do you see? And it seems to me that these people here are doing the job of what the religious people ought to be doing.

Do you see? Do you follow me? It's almost like the book of Acts. They're going out. They've not got the gospel but they're going out. They're going out with news about Jesus.

So that was the passion of the general public. And we saw their reaction and if you're anything like me you've been comparing that to your own life. So each one of us has been challenged.

And now our second group of people the Pharisees. I've called this point the slavery of the Pharisees. Let's just think about the contrast here.

[9 : 00] The contrast with these religious people to the general public. You know they themselves the Pharisees Pharisees they should be scaring the countryside shouldn't they to bring people to Jesus.

The whole world ought to be converging in Genesis chapter 12. They should have built runways hospitality centres they should have set up a website come and see him who claims to be God ought to be their message.

Do you see? Look at his healing. Do you see it? They should be pleading with their sick friends queuing up for coffee. Queuing up for coffee they should be saying to each other you know I've

been thinking about this scale it all up universalise it all and what's going on here it's like the new creations coming in.

That's what they should be saying. They sit down at a table to drink the coffee and one of them says think about our scrolls all those prophecies they're being fulfilled one after the other like dominoes falling down.

Then they start clearing the table of the bits and bobs and they get up to go. He and Isaiah must have known each other they should have worked out. And as they walk outside Starbucks out into the sunshine they should say this should be their message the kingdom of God is at hand.

[10:27] That's what the Pharisees should be saying. So let's have a look at their reaction and it's quite a shock chapter 7 verses 1 and 2. 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. That's amazing isn't it? Do you see? Absolutely amazing. I can still hardly believe it.

Their reaction. a delegation from HQ in Jerusalem it's like a government health inspector arriving in the kitchen the bell rings we all stand back the cameras zoom in they saw verse 2 that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled that is unwashed.

And then we have their reaction in verse 5 they ask a question just look there at verse 5 and the Pharisees and the scribes asked him why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders but eat with defiled hands?

So what they're saying is they're saying Jesus your disciples they're playing fast and loose with our traditions do you see? After all we are in the region of Galilee it is a Gentile region those marketplaces it's almost as if they're thinking they're pure and without any defilement themselves do you see?

[12:04] So it's external washing that is their focus do you see? Outer purification it's like visiting a farm in the middle of a foot and mouth outbreak there might be a trough of disinfectant or something and you have to stand in it with your welling things on and then get out and wipe them off with some loose straw so it's tradition it's about externals they literally want to wash their hands of the Gentiles that's their interest and it's all entwined in law and stipulations and they're policing it and these verses are about listen what is the supreme authority?

Is it the church and its teaching? Or is it Jesus? Here's another way of asking that question are our lines of communication horizontal or are they vertical to the living God?

That's another way of thinking about it So we've had the incident in verse 2 we've had the case presented by the Pharisees in verse 5 and now verse 6 the judge gives his verdict look there at verse 6 and Jesus 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 do you see the inconsistency of man-made religion it's all outward appearance says Jesus you hypocrites he says imagine friends having a relationship with somebody imagine this they love you with their lips but their heart is far from you just imagine that it's awful isn't it and that's what Jesus is saying here about these Pharisees of course we all have traditions we all have traditions of one form or another tradition is sort of another word for teaching and many traditions are very helpful many of the things that we do are helpful you know the way that we serve communion the way that we would operate a funeral how that would work the order of service the tradition of music or otherwise in churches there's many such traditions that are very helpful yet here

Jesus is getting behind the appearance and looking at the motive do you see the Hebrew oral Torah you'll have to just might need to take a breath of oxygen and just think this one through you'll need to concentrate the Hebrew Torah it was the law of Moses and it was also supplemented by an oral tradition and the tradition was there to sort of ring fence the law of Moses to sort of hedge it in to prevent accidental transgression so it went into great detail and it went into all the small minutiae of life and the Pharisees were experts in the Torah this was their main qualification but listen the Torah became a tool for circumventing God's law do you see and it developed into sort of an interpretive grid through which you read

God's law so you would have the law of Moses and you would have the oral tradition and you'd sort of see and interpret the law of Moses through all this additional teaching that had been added through the years and so the law of God was applied and controlled by tradition he is an ancient

ploy the devil introduced an ancient tradition to Adam and Eve in the garden and Adam sidestepped God's law and friends we can so easily follow suit can't we and then Jesus says to them he says the case in point is your law on Corban it's an evasive tactic verse 9 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 and mother must surely die but you say if a man tells his father or his mother whatever you would have gained from me is [17:04] Corban that is given over to God then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother verse 13 thus making void the word of God says Jesus by your tradition that you have handed down and many such things you do yes friends God does want us to live lives that are devoted to God if you like Corban sort of lives to use the language here but not in a way that transgresses other laws of God you see otherwise it's self contradictory hypocritical is the word that Jesus uses there in verse 6 so 2007 and we need to ensure that tradition is shaped by the Bible by God's word and not the other way around because Jesus is saying here that would nullify his word his teaching and so if there's any tradition that we're sort of considering as a church it must be the servant of scripture do you see the servant of Jesus and if we deviate from that principle well some strong language comes through 2000 years to meet us in 2007 it reaches us from Galilee two words beginning with

V verse 7 in vain do they worship me and then Jesus verse 13 thus making void the word of God he says do you see imagine imagine a church and they're sort of introducing some novel tradition some tradition of the world and it's contrary to God's word just think of that particular situation you know think about this all traditions enter the fray at some point so think about a church doing yeah you know this church it does have sermons people do get the Bibles open but worldly traditions are the rule of thumb worldly traditions are the authority in this church and as we're leaving this particular church we're squeezing past the minister as he shakes people's hands at the door and as we're trying to get past we look down and we see he's got a Bible we look down at the Bible and we're quite curious is it a

King James version is it an NIV so he looked down on it and there there's one word embossed on the leather cover void says Jesus verse 13 so that was the slavery of the Pharisees they were slaves to tradition and they'd lost the plot and we're going to finish now with some good news our third point Jesus' disciples are liberated yes friend if you're trusting Jesus Christ you've been liberated from having to make up your own religion and these disciples are liberated it's a relationship with Jesus that saves them not made up religion and Martin Luther do you know Martin Luther the reformer his eyes lit up as he was reading Romans in 1514 in Wittenberg and he saw that he was saved not by religion but by trusting in Jesus Christ as his saviour and the rally call of the reformation went out sola scriptura by the word only

I woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed me St. Charles Wesley there's a group of guys in here a couple of Saturdays ago they had an Islamic background they're actually from Iran there's about six or seven of them they were sat in a pew over there and I went to chat with them I explained the gospel to them and I said that your own religion can't actually deal with your sin it can't remove your sin it needs to be atoned for and your own religion can't actually do that I said you just need to trust in Jesus that's all you need to do trust in Jesus and I said that's why in general Christians are such happy people and I made an exaggerated expression on my face I said we've always got smiles on our faces so we're happy people and so here it is it's the gospel friends isn't it shall we pray dear heavenly father we thank you once again for sending your son into this world we thank you father how in all that he's doing he's confronting the ways of this world and the religion of this world and he's showing us that we are saved entirely by his work on the cross as he dies for us and absorbs the punishment that would otherwise be ours we thank you father how the people around Gennesaret got a sense of his power we thank you that his disciples were trusting in him and were liberated and we pray for ourselves father we pray you'd help us to live lives as liberated people people trusting in the only way of salvation your son

Jesus Christ and we pray father that you go with us now back into our situations back to work and back into all the complexities of this day we pray that you guide us through your spirit and help us to exemplify what it is to be yours in Christ and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and forevermore Amen