

## Mark chapter 7

V 1. In chapter 7 Mark takes us back to the controversy brewing with the temple establishment – Pharisees and scribes.

Vs. 2-4 the temple group see Jesus' disciples eating without the ritual washing of hands. In an aside Mark explains how this lack of proper washing violates the tradition of the elders. Hygiene is not the issue here – nor is the law exactly. This ritual of washing is part of the tradition developed by the Pharisees to help prevent any violation of the Torah. The emphasis is on the external as a means of maintaining purity.

These practices raised important questions for the followers of Jesus because table fellowship brought communities together. Kosher practices kept Jews and Gentiles from eating together.

V.5 the public challenge to Jesus was meant to dishonor him in front of those who thought Jesus was holy.

Vs. 6-23

There is no subtlety in Jesus' response. He calls them hypocrites and quotes Isaiah. He accuses them of abandoning and rejecting God's commandments – using the example of Corban. Corban denotes a gift or sacrificial offering that is consecrated to God. Jesus rejects a practice that allowed a son to make a vow declaring his goods holy, thereby exempting him from sharing them with his parents.

Not content with that Jesus calls the crowd to him and reinterprets for them the understanding of purity – which for Jesus is a matter of the heart. Since a Jewish body was more pure than a Gentile body, a male body more pure than a female body, a physically whole body more pure than one less than whole – Jesus turns all that upside down so that it becomes entirely possible for a Gentile to be as pure as a Jew and so on through the list.

In the kingdom of God everyone is welcome at the table.

Vs. 24-30 the Syrophenician woman

Mark's insistence on the radical inclusivity of the kingdom is not an easy road to follow.

This woman is Gentile, female, pagan, in appropriately assertive.

This story is focused on the Gentile place in the kingdom rather than the exorcism.

Jesus' words are harsh. He affirms the priority of the Jews. But the woman is clever and turns his words to her own use. Jesus specifically says – what you said convinces me – your daughter is healed.

The early church used this story to affirm the inclusion of Gentiles.

Vs. 31-37

This miracle story is very detailed, describing every action of Jesus, which heightens the sense of the miraculous.

The man is deaf but he isn't actually mute. The Greek means he spoke indistinctly.