

Growing Forward
Feb 21, 2010
Exod 20:1-3 and Mark 7:1-8
Dr. Jeff H. McCrory Jr.

Synopsis:

The topic of clean and unclean in the Bible is confusing at best and archaic and beside the point at worst. The issue behind the clean-unclean issue in the Bible is this: Does our heart reflect the heart of God? If it is, we are clean. If it isn't, we are unclean.

How's your heart today?

I.

Tradition!

Mark 7:3 Thus observing the tradition of the elders

"Tradition!" sings Tevye the milkman (Fiddler on the Roof)

- you know the story, Russia is changing and thus conflict
- Tevye thinks he is holding to the ways of God
- his children think otherwise

*CRISIS

Here's what's at stake:

1. Tradition =
 - can reflect the ways of God
 - can be only human stubbornness
2. Novelty =
 - can be God speaking to us
 - can be the human boredom

*How do we know if our *traditions*, our ways of doing things, reflect the heart of God?
-individuals?
-church?

II.

Tradition Over Heart

Mark 7:8 You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition

Tradition was trumping heart in Mark 7

What's going on in Mark 7?

- Mark 7:2 Clean versus unclean = not hygiene but morals
- not *lavese los manos*
 - *word here is *defiled* = Greek *koine* = *common*
 - what gets us close to God = holy/clean
 - what pulls us away from God = defiled/common

Mark 7:3 Tradition of the elders

-1st and 2nd Torah Moses gave

*written Torah = on tablets = first

*oral Torah = passed down to rabbis = second *Misnah*

By time of Jesus, more oral than written

Used to separate Jews from Gentiles

*CRISIS when Jesus shows up

Does what they are doing (Torah) reflect the heart of God?

Why should we care?

Mark 7:1-23 reports a bunch of stuff people were doing, which may or may not reflect the heart of God

*Key verse is Jesus' quote of Isaiah 29

READ Mark 7:6-8

Heart/Commandment of God

Lips/Human Tradition

Current application

-Are we doing a bunch of stuff that doesn't reflect the heart of God?

-Is the heart of God to separate us from them out there?

III.

Heart Over Tradition

Mark 7:20 It is what comes out of a person that defiles

We are tempted to put tradition over heart (like Tevye)

Church in Western world is in crisis

-Things aren't like they used to be

-People don't come in here anymore

-Presbyterian Church is dying

-Society doesn't reflect Christian morals

-Individual Christians are confused

*CRISIS

How do we discern the heart of God vs Tradition?

-don't abandon tradition for novelty without discernment

-Jesus gives some criteria:

God focused heart = Mark 7:6

Commandment/Word of God = Mark 7:8, 13

Actions coming out of us = Mark 7:20

(based on heart and Word)

Heart of God for Geneva: Growing Forward Plans

Basis: Staff and Session got together in November

"We aren't happy with a slow decline"

“What is the heart of God for this church?”

Not to separate us from them out there!

“Is what we’re doing working (tradition)?”

Prayed for God’s heart

Read Scripture

Listened in order to act

Came up with 4 Growing Forward Projects for 2010

1. **Discipleship** = Growing us in our relationship to Jesus
 - want each of you in small group study

2. **Worship Arts** = Raising up a new generation of worshippers
 - gift to Geneva is music, traditional and contemporary
 - use this to make the community a holy place

3. **Community Outreach** = Getting us into our neighborhoods
 - Open Door class and events out there

4. **Communication** = Telling Geneva’s story more effectively
 - New paper online and in hands
 - New media opportunities

COME TO CONG MEETING AND HEAR MORE

Our traditions should reflect the heart of God