

One of the things we're going to do this summer, Marsha, is take a little trip to New York, New York... Just to be part it... Boston > New York.

Happy Mother's Day & HAPPY early 15th ANNIVERSARY (July 22, 2006)

And one of the things we're going to put it on the list of possibilities is a trip to the Museum of Modern Art, where we will see one of the world's most famous paintings: Vincent Van Gogh's "Starry Night".

#1 PIC OF COUPLE & STARRY NIGHT.

It measures (28.7 in × 36.25 in). Van Gogh took his oil paint and put it on canvas, and began to paint the captivating night scenes he witnessed over the French countryside, before he was sadly admitted to an asylum for mental health needs. Who knew Van Gogh wanted to be a preacher?

But who knew that being a painter is just as important as being a preacher if that's your assignment from God? This painting...

#2 PIC OF STARRY NIGHT

This painting is "the signature example of van Gogh's innovative and bold use of thick brushstrokes. The striking blues and yellows and the dreamy, swirling atmosphere have intrigued art lovers for decades.

It would be amazing to see it, not in a picture but in person.

Now, here's a dark thought... Can you imagine if I had the insane audacity to think... I could improve this work, as Titus says: "just a little bit." After all, I took I had Art Class my Freshman year with Mr. Wheely at Greenwood High School.

- 1) I could bring a little paint set and touch up a couple of the stars, maybe add a little neon orange or brighter purple.
- 2) Or maybe I could rub some turpentine on the oil to remove the aspects of Van Gogh's renowned work that I don't care for...

Take heart... I have no plans of getting locked up or gaining worldwide shame! But there is something far worse than imprisonment... There is something far worse than adding to or taking away from Van Gogh's masterpiece.

Adding to or taking away from God's Word and the work of Jesus in the gospel.

That's why I want to introduce you to...

"3 Ways to Live" Mark 7:1-23

Read Mark 7:1-23

What are the three ways to live? #1

1. Life as a Lawmaker

The religious leaders had an issue that we can understand in our day: Sanitization. They wanted to make sure everyone washed their hands before eating. Sounds reasonable, right?

- You don't wash, you don't eat.
- Moms, *how many times* do you tell your children: "Wash your hands! It's time to eat."? 30 seconds later... "Did you wash your hands?" You get that guilty smile. "If you want to eat, you better go wash your hands!"
- What's the issue?! Why *wouldn't* Jesus and his disciples wash their hands?
- This was not about hygiene but the "tradition of the elders" as we see in verse 3 & 5.
 - They captured this tradition in an important book known as the Mishnah, which provided commentary on how to apply the OT Law.
 - Though the Old Testament prescribed hand washing for the priests before offering sacrifices (Exodus 30:18-21; 40:30-32), the religious leaders said everyone should do it!
- This is how it worked.
 - If they were at home, they would cover their hands in water before they ate, BUT...
 - If they were coming from the marketplace, they immersed their arms, possibly even their entire bodies, because they might have touched an unclean person (for example, a Gentile! - Non-Jewish person). There was an incredible dose of judgmentalism and even racism. "Oh, we're better than them. We've got to get their filth off us."

The key question, loaded with accusation, comes in verse 5: "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

Jesus does not answer their question directly, but gives them much much more than they wanted to hear.

Read 6-8... We are going to come back to these words.

Then he provides a practical example as to how they make up new laws to set aside God's laws in verse 9.

- You "leave" this, so that you can "hold" this.
- You "reject" this, so you can "establish" this. (Physical pictures)
- You make up new things for people to do (placing burdens on their back), but do not honor the things God actually said for us to do!
- Jesus said: "You are very good at rejecting" [Applaud!] Yes, Jesus was being sarcastic.
-

The practical example he gives centers around the 5th command in the 10 Commandments (See Exodus 20). God said through Moses, "Honor your father and mother."

- Where are my children in here today? God says, "Honor your father and mother."
 - Trick question... We're all children...
 - Honor means... respecting them, loving them, listening to them, doing what they say, and making sweet cards and practicing the "Mommy Rule" on Mother's Day (before you ask mom anything, you have to give her a massage, and then go ask someone else or wait til tomorrow!)
- And then he adds Exodus 21:10: if you don't honor them, it's not going to go well for you. Period.

What was their specific issue? The practice of "Corban." Look at verse 11.

- "Corban" means "gift." Here it refers to gifts that the leaders had dedicated to God, and once dedicated to God, it could not be used for anything else.
- Here's what is going on: these "religious people" had parents that had material needs, but they did not help their parents. Oh, you need some financial assistance to pay your taxes? Corban. It's gone,

dedicated to God. Need some help with groceries this month? Corban. Oh, I'd do something Nic for you this week, but "Corban!"

Do you see the problem?

- They added to God's Word, creating requirements God did not require.
- They made new laws: if you REALLY love God, if you REALLLY want to please God... you will not only wash your hands, you'll wash the cups, the pots and the copper utensils... You'll never taste alcohol, never dance, wear certain clothes to church, never listen to THAT kind of music, you won't follow them on Twitter, and spend at least 4 hours in prayer a day, etc etc etc.

T: But it's not just lawmaking. It's lawbreaking.

2. Life as a Lawbreaker (7:14-23).

In verse 14, Jesus says: "Listen up!" In verse 15, he gives a little parable (READ IT) and then explains it in verse 18 (READ IT).

- Mark makes a parenthetical comment saying in verse 19: "Thus, he declared all foods clean." Some of you foodies are like: "That's my favorite verse in the Bible." I gotta memorize THAT - Mark. 7:1-9! :) [For more see the endnotes]
- What's the point? It's not what goes in that taints us. It's what comes out of our hearts. The heart is the place where we mass produce of good or evil. The fruit comes from the root.
- That's why you should highlight. Verse 21 could read: "For from within, from the human heart, come evil thoughts, resulting in..."
- Jesus says evil actions flow from evil thoughts. He then highlights a selective (not exhaustive) list of 12 ways we set aside God's good plans for us:

Evil thoughts set the stage for #1...

1. Sexual immorality - (*porneia*). This word refers to any and all sexual sin: pre-marital, extra-marital, and unnatural. This includes pornography. We are not here to judge you. We are here to help you.
2. Theft - Stealing. Taking what is not yours. [8th commandment (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19).] Two weeks ago, some dude dressed up as a delivery man was swiping kids' scooters. C'mon! Can we pray for all the scammers! That junk makes me angry!
3. Murder - The unlawful premeditated killing of another person. [6th commandment (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17).]
4. Adultery - Violating the marriage covenant through engaging in sexual behavior physically or mentally (Matt 5:28) with someone else. [7th commandment (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18).]
5. Coveting - desire that threatens the rights of someone else [10th commandment (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21)].
6. Wickedness - a general term referring to evil or malicious behavior.
7. Deceit - refers to deception and dishonesty.
8. Sensuality - Unchecked, shameless living that completely lacks moral discernment or restraint.
9. Envy - is jealously rooted in unbelief. Envy believes God is withholding His best from us.
10. Slander - Defaming speech about others.
11. Pride - Elevating ourselves above others. Arrogance.
12. Foolishness - a senseless disregard for God' truth.

Jesus is teaching us: it's not only dead wrong to attempt to enhance the "Starry Night" with extra paint, it's equally wrong to apply turpentine to remove one speck. It's not just lawmaking. It's lawbreaking.

What evil thoughts are creeping into your heart and coming out of your life? Sexual immortality? Coveting? Envy? Slander? Pride?

Pull Down Idols

God has been reteaching me about pulling down the idols in my heart, anything I elevate in the place of God.

- Before God used Gideon to save Israel, he told him to pull down the idols and build an altar of true worship.
- We have to pull down before we build up. We have to undo before we do. [s/o Impact Music, and Pastor Enzo: "No More Idols"]
- Sometimes we have to pull off to the side of the road & reroute your Waze App after we realize we were traveling to Dartmouth, NH and not Dartmouth, MA.
-
- How? Confess to God. Receive forgiveness. Pull down the idols and build a life of worship.
- 1 John 1:9... "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- Did you hear that? We can live without guilt *and* without shame. Guilt says, "You did wrong." Shame says, "You are wrong. You are unacceptable. You are dirty. You need to hide (see Gen 3:7-13).

Shame Off You

- There are few experiences more difficult than shame. The thoughts you want no one to know. The actions, if broadcast to others, would make you walk out of the room.
- When Jesus died on the cross, he gave his life for our sin AND our shame! Jesus was physically SHAMED in that moment (yes, he was naked) and spiritually shamed, because sin carries consequences leading to guilt, wrath, and judgment, BUT JESUS took the consequences and said, "Take the shame off them, and put it ON me."

Jesus is saying: "SHAME OFF YOU!"

My guy "Thereal EMY VASQUEZ" taught me that this week. [Shout out Leominster, MA, Shout Excel Church.]

- You've said: "Shame on her! Shame on HIM! SHAME ON YOU!"
- It's time we start saying: "Shame OFF YOU!" Our words have power.
- SHAME OFF YOU! and SHAME OFF ME... [Dust yourself off...] You don't have to wear it or carry it any longer. It was crucified at the cross!

And let preach for a minute: That's just for the bad stuff. That doesn't even include all the good stuff we'd like to do, could do, maybe should do, that we can't do or don't do.

Moms, Marsha has informed me of this reality known as "Mom Guilt."

This is where you don't feel like you're being a GOOD ENOUGH MOM, because you're not doing enough.

SHAME OFF YOU, MOMs. Shame. OFF. YOU!

T: The cross is powerful! Thank you, Jesus!

3. Life as a Christian (7:6-7).

Let's go back to verses 6-7.

Life as a Christian is a life of worship. It's not lawmaking. It's not lawbreaking. It's living in the freedom of Christ. A freedom from sin and shame, a freedom from carry the burden of unnecessary expectations, and a freedom to love, to live with joy, to walk around and tell others - SHAME OFF YOU, and here's how... Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus, like Isaiah 700 years earlier (these verses are a direct quotation of Isaiah 29:13)...

- Calls out their hypocrisy.
- And Calls them and everyone to an authentic devotion to God.
- He calls us to never elevate human tradition above God's Word, and to live life with a clean heart that is daily being changed by grace!

God is after close hearts and true worship!! The gospel of Jesus transforms us from the inside-out. This is the promise of the new Covenant.

- I'm glad we pray.. so thankful for our Fire Nights crew Friday night! But WHY do we PRAY?
- I'm so thankful for our Music Team, but WHY do we SING?
- I'm so glad we have GROUPS to connect with, but WHY do we CONNECT?

Keep asking "Why?" because "why?" gets to the heart! Why? Helps us remember... honoring God with our lives means honoring him daily, hourly, minute by minute.

Marsha and I were talking this week. Love my wife, love the mom of the year, the last 12 years running. I have no greater armor bearer than her, and I'm trying to be the same for her (go read 1 Samuel 14, especially verse 7 where Jonathan's armor bearer says: "Do all that is in your heart. Behold, I am with you heart and soul.")

Anyway, we were talking... and I told her that more and more, with the depths of my being, I could care less what people think of my sermons. Listen, I'm a human, when you say, "Pastor T, that sermon was fire." Or "Good word." Or fist bump with that look like "the Spirit got me today." (You know what I'm talking about?) Hey... that means a lot. It's always an encouragement.

But you know what I really care about? Is the sermon awesome on Tuesday? Is it awesome on Thursday? Here's my new mantra: "Thank you. Text me Thursday!"

Why? Because if the Word is really getting through... it will change the way you live this week. That's what Jesus wants.

Increasingly done with the lawmaking. Legalism only adds burdens.
Increasingly done with lawbreaking. It never satisfied anyway.

The Point: Jesus wants worship from the heart.

Conclusion:

Let's move from the story on this page to the space of your heart.

Where is God calling you back? Move into a time of personal confession...

Endnotes:

- “Mark notes that Jesus’ teaching, in essence, declared all foods clean. The Mosaic ceremonial laws distinguished between “clean” and “unclean” foods (see Lev. 11:1-47). Their purpose was to instill an awareness of God’s holiness and of the reality of sin as a barrier to fellowship with God. But once defilement of the heart is thoroughly removed and full fellowship with God becomes a reality (through the atoning death of Jesus; see Mark 10:45; Rom. 14:14; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:10, 14), the ceremonial laws have fulfilled their purpose and are no longer required.” (ESV Study Bible)