

Lent Devotional March 14, 2026

Scripture

Mark 7:1-23

1 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, 2 they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. 3 (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders, 4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash, and there are also many other traditions that they observe: the washing of cups and pots and bronze kettles and beds.) 5 So 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?" 6 He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

*'This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
7 in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.'*

8 "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

9 Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God), 12 then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, 13 thus nullifying the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this."

14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, "So, are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, 19 since it enters not the heart but the stomach and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. 21 For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, folly. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Devotion

Kacy Grayson '22

Check Your Heart

Being a member at my home church for so long has made me aware of some of the norms during worship—where people's "unassigned, assigned seats" are, when to sit and rise, when not to go to the bathroom, who plays the tambourines, who has the good church candy in their purse. The list goes on.

Now imagine the traditional norms of your own church, and ponder: what would happen if someone sat in one of those unassigned, assigned, seats? What would happen if someone shouted out with praise when the congregation is usually silent, during the sermon? What if the music was more upbeat instead

of mellow and calm? You might say to yourself, “That person must be new.” “What’s going on with the music today?” “It’s never like this.”

In a similarly troubled fashion, the Pharisees were concerned with Jesus’ disciples not upholding the traditional norm of ceremonial washing. They can’t understand how Jesus’ disciples could go against the standards. For them, these practices signified identity, status, and separation from the unholy.

Instead of Jesus agreeing and encouraging his disciples to comply, He challenges the Pharisees. He reminds them that these traditions are human-made. In creating these traditions, they’ve let go of the commands of God and made their own customs more significant. He prompts them to consider that their *true* identity as followers of God comes from what’s inside their hearts.

Lent invites us to consider this same truth—to reshape how we respond to life’s changes and challenges, to reevaluate the posture of our hearts when it comes to our expectations weighed against our obedience to God. Instead of responding with frustration and judgment, Jesus calls us to remember that God expects us to respond with the same love and grace that He extends to us every day.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate teacher and shows us how to live life righteously. May our interactions with all of Your creation exude the love of Christ that flows through our hearts. May we all embody what it truly means to “love thy neighbor,” even when it challenges our comfort levels. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.