

Tradition as a Way to Unite People

Text

Mark 7:1-7 ¹ Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. ² Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. ³ For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

⁶ He answered and 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. ⁷ And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

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Memory Verse

Mark 7:3 *For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.*

Introduction

People stick together because of what they share - beliefs, practices, a way of life. That shared stuff is tradition, and it is powerful. It creates identity. It says “we belong to each other”.

Sometimes people are born into a group. Sometimes they choose it. In Acts 2:5 you see “proselytes” - people who were not born Jewish but joined by conviction. Once they agreed to the customs, they were in.

Objective

To see how traditions unite people, why that matters, and where to draw the line when tradition clashes with Jesus.

Presentation

1. The Tradition of Worshipping Diana, and Profiteering from False Worship

Ephesus and Diana

Demetrius the silversmith made money selling shrines to Diana (Acts 19:23-27). When Paul preached Jesus and said that “they are not gods which are made with hands”, business dropped. So Demetrius rallied the whole city. Their shared tradition - worship of Diana - united them against Paul.

Lesson: What you believe shapes how you live and work. If you follow Jesus, you should be ready to explain why (1 Pet. 3:15). Do not hide it. Your life should make sense in the light of Him.

2. The Tradition of Moses And The Elders United People Against Jesus

Jesus's day

The people said, “We are disciples of Moses” (John 9:28-29). They were loyal to the law God gave Moses at Sinai. But they also added traditions of the elders - the Talmud - and treated those as if they were equal to God's Word.

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Jesus asked, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord’ but not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Their tradition united them, but it made them miss the Messiah standing right in front of them.

Lesson: Loyalty to tradition is not bad. But if tradition blinds you to Jesus, it has gone wrong.

3. Shared Beliefs Unite Groups – Even if The Beliefs Are Erroneous

The Sadducees

The Sadducees believed that there is no resurrection, no angels, no spirits (Acts 23:8). That belief united them. Anyone who agreed was “one of us”.

Lesson: Every group needs something that holds them together. That is in part why traditions evolve. A false belief system can itself become a stronghold by which people are united.

You have a right to your cultural practices. But God’s approval matters more than group approval (Acts 17:24-28). If your tradition goes against God’s order, it will not last.

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Conclusion

Every tradition - political, social, economic, religious - means something to the people who hold it. It is their right to have it.

But here is the test: Does it line up with Jesus? If people misunderstand you for following Him, that is okay (Rom. 14:22). What is not okay is keeping a tradition that pushes you away from Him.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How was it possible for the people of Jesus's day to follow Moses who was not among them but reject Jesus Who was living with them?
 - * They were loyal to the tradition and identity Moses gave them at Sinai. It was familiar, inherited, and made them feel secure as God's people. Jesus challenged their traditions and called them to obey Him directly. It is easier to follow a dead hero and keep your customs than to follow a living Lord who demands change.

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2. Tradition is a people's fundamental right unless ...
 - * ...it runs counter to the tradition of Christ. You can keep your culture, but not if it contradicts Jesus's teaching or leads people away from God.
3. It is only God-ordained traditions and / or customs that can unite subjects. True or False?
 - * False. Any shared belief can unite people - even false ones, like the Sadducees' denial of resurrection. But only God-ordained traditions unite people in a way that lasts and pleases God.
4. Those who practise their customs and / or traditions in secret are both cowards and sinners. Why?
 - * If you know a practice is wrong before God but hide it, you are refusing to repent and you are ashamed of the truth. Jesus said to live openly in the light (John 3:20-21). Secret sin and secret idolatry show that you value people's approval more than God's approval. That is both fearful and sinful.

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Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Let the love of Christ guide every thought and action in us. Make us bold to live for You, even when our traditions are challenged. In Jesus's name, Amen.