

## Mark 7:1–13 — Jesus Takes On Tradition

**May 5, 2019**

Welcome to CrossWinds. Today we are back in the Gospel of Mark. Two weeks ago, when we were last in this Gospel, we learned that Jesus was the original surfer. We studied when Jesus walked on water. In that story, Jesus was displaying his divine nature all over the place. He walked on water. He instantly calmed another storm. He transported the boat from one part of the lake to the shore on the other side like the transporter room on Star Trek moved people from one location to another. In that story, we didn't just learn Jesus is God but we also learned Jesus cares about us. Jesus came to the rescue of his apostles in their time of need.

In a similar way, Jesus comes to the rescue of us as well. Even when life is out of control, and we are in a storm of loss that has us spinning out of control, Jesus cares about us. Jesus is fully capable of rescuing us. Has anyone here experienced a time when Jesus came to your rescue in one of life's storms? Yes, he has for many of us. The greatest rescue of Jesus is when we face the enemy of death. In the chaos of death, he brings peace, and when we close our eyes in this life, he transports us home safely to that heavenly shore because of our faith and trust in him. He does this all because he loves us.

This morning, as we return to the Gospel of Mark, we are in Mark 7:1-13. At this point, Jesus and his apostles are on the west side of the lake. They took the short walk from Genesseret, where their boat landed, back to Capernaum.



This section of Mark is an important transition in the book. In Mark 6, Jesus was at the peak of his popularity. He fed the 5,000, which was more like 20,000. He created fish and chips for the entire crowd. It was a miracle so powerful the Gospel of John tells us the crowds tried to make him king by force after that miracle. Jesus refused.

Once Jesus refused to be king, his popularity began to slowly decline. There were still crowds that followed him in different villages, but they were not nearly as big as in Galilee. From this point forward, Jesus focused most of his efforts on the 12 apostles as he prepared them for the task of bringing the gospel to the ends of the world with the power of the Holy Spirit. While this begins a slow fade of Jesus' popularity, the work of the Jewish leadership to discredit Jesus started to gain momentum in this chapter. That is what happened in Mark 7.

Incidentally, John 6 tells us it was around Passover when Jesus fed the 5,000. At this point, we are in the final year of Jesus' life before his death on the cross.

Rather than reading the text, we are going to work our way through the text and let the story unfold.

### **The Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus' disciples for not following their tradition.**

**Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem... Mark 7:1 (ESV)**

Let's stop right here and look at this. We have an official religious delegation of scribes that came from Jerusalem to check Jesus out. These people were from the center of Judaism. They were the people who had the big brains. They taught in the schools. They were the best and brightest thinkers in

all of Judaism. They were very prestigious. They came from the big city of Jerusalem to the small rural community of Capernaum at the request of the local Jewish leaders, who were looking for a way to confront Jesus and to discredit him. We already know from Mark 3 that the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead. Now Jesus' popularity increased to the point that 20,000 people wanted to make him king, and the local Jewish leaders realized they had a serious problem on their hands. They needed help to get rid of Jesus. That is why they brought in the big brains from Jerusalem. They were putting serious effort into trapping and getting rid of Jesus.

...they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. Mark 7:2 (ESV)

After investigation, these bright men with minds as quick as lawyers concluded that Jesus was not colluding with the Russians. In all seriousness, they could not find anything to critique Jesus about when it came to issues of the Bible, so they resorted to critiquing him on what appears to be a minor technicality. Some of Jesus' disciples were not properly washing their hands before they ate. This sounds incredibly petty. That is something your mother told you to do before you came to dinner when you were 6. Couldn't they find anything more significant to critique Jesus and his disciples about than not properly washing their hands before they ate?

In truth, there was much more to this issue than mere sanitation. This was a matter of following tradition. People in that day were not stupid. They knew you needed to wash your hands before you ate or you would get sick. Basic cleanliness was not the issue. The issue was tradition.

In the book of Leviticus, the priests were given a number of ceremonial hand washings they were to follow. The ceremonial washings of the priests in Leviticus were to demonstrate the need of cleansing from sin as part of their priestly functions. Those priestly hand washings were not given for everyone to follow. They were only given to the priests. But what was once given just to the priests, had over time become a tradition that many priests expected common people to follow. Mark added a comment to explain this because he was writing this Gospel to Gentiles who were not familiar with Jewish ceremonial washings.

(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) Mark 7:3–4 (ESV)

About 200 years before Jesus, pious Jews began thinking the way they could show their love for God was to adopt priestly hand washings as part of their everyday lives. That way, they would look super dedicated to God. This began to spread among the people as people tried to outdo one another in showing their godly devotion by performing priestly ritual hand washings in everyday life. People were pressured to wash their hands in this ritualistic fashion before every meal and even between courses of a long meal.

The amount of water required for these washing reveals what little sanitary value they possessed. The amount of water needed could be as little as one and a half egg shells of water. You can't clean your hands with one and a half egg shells full of water!

What did these washings look like? First, water was poured on both hands and the fingers pointed in the air so the water ran down the arm and off the

elbow. Second, the water was poured on the palm and the fingers were pointed downward so the water ran off the fingertips. Third, the hand was rubbed clean with the fist of the other hand. Tradition specified this was to be done before each meal and between courses of meals.

If a Jew went out in public, the ritual washings were more extensive because they could have touched an an unclean Samaritan or Gentile. Coming back from the market you were to submerge yourself completely in water to be washed. Remember this was a ritual washing. You didn't need to scrub behind your ears, and no soap was used.

In addition, the scribes and Pharisees had developed traditions they enforced for not just ritual washing of your hands but of pots and pans to make sure they were ceremonially clean. There were extensive details they developed on how the ritual washings of pots, pan, and even dinning couches were to be washed. There are more than 30 chapters in the Jewish Mishnah describing the proper way to ritually wash pots and pans. Remember this was not about sanitation. Hot water and soap were not used. It was all about ritual and had ceremonial value, with little actual value.

The Jewish leaders had developed these traditions then enforced them on people that were never required to observe them in the Bible. The Jewish leaders also didn't really care about what was happening in people's hearts. All they cared about was the obedience to their traditions on the outside.

To give us a better understanding of these Jewish traditions, how they developed and what happened to them over time, I will give a quick historical overview on Jewish tradition.

When Moses gave the law at Mt. Sinai, it was written down. That is the Pentateuch, which is the first five books of the Old Testament. These books contained God's laws. God's people consistently broke God's laws so God sent them into exile in Babylon. Seventy years later, God, in his mercy, set them free from captivity and brought a group of them back to Jerusalem. The people knew they were sent into captivity because they broke God's laws and to avoid being sent into exile again, they needed to learn God's law. Ezra was the first of a group of men called scribes. A scribe's job was to study the law then explain the law to the people so they could understand the law and follow the law.

To ensure people wouldn't break the law, scribes after Ezra decided to put a fence around the law. The fence was extra rules beyond the law that were more severe than God ever required. They reasoned that if people broke the fence of their laws, they would still would not be close enough to breaking God's actual laws. As a result, over the years, in an effort to build a protective fence around the law, they developed rules, ceremonies, and rituals with all kinds of prohibitions. They took rituals and ceremonies, such as priestly hand washing, and forced them on all the people. The hope was their increased piety and fence of extra rules would keep people from disobeying God's rules and they would remain in the land.

These fence rules continued to grow over time until a massive amount of material was developed by the scribes. In the time of Jesus, it was called, “the traditions of the elders.” Remember it started with good intent. It was intended to be a fence around the law to protect the law, but over time it began to replace God’s law.

In 200 A.D., the massive oral tradition of the elders were finally pulled together and written down by a man named Rabbi Jehuda. He put all the traditions of the elders into a book called the Mishnah. Mishnah simply means to repeat. His hope was his book would help the traditions of the elders be repeated for many generations. Rabbi Jehuda did not edit these traditions, he just compiled them. Some of the material was good and helpful. Some of these traditions were bad. Some traditions were the words of wise men. Other traditions were the words of foolish and crazy men. The Mishnah contained all of it. It was the total accumulation of Jewish tradition from wise men to knuckle heads for hundreds of years.

The Mishnah was so large, eclectic, and confusing that Jewish leaders then needed to write commentaries to explain it because it was so confusing. Those commentaries were called the Gemera. At that point you had the huge Mishnah, which was a library of extra Jewish traditions covering hundreds of years, plus the Gemera, trying to explain the Mishnah. Both of them were eventually put together in something called the Talmud. The rabbis in Jerusalem put the official Talmud together. As if the Jerusalem Talmud wasn’t big enough, the rabbis in Babylon decided they wanted to write their own Talmud which had

even more traditions of the elders. The Babylonian Talmud ended up four times larger than the Jerusalem Talmud, which was already encyclopedic in size.

As if the Jews didn't have enough extra rules covering up the Bible, the Jewish leaders then added the Midrash. The Midrash was a rabbinic commentary on the books of the Bible. So you have this huge mass of extra traditions added to the Bible designed to be a fence around the Bible that at this point are so large and complex that for all practical purposes they have replaced the Bible.

And 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?" Mark 7:5 (ESV)

There you see our key term, *tradition of the elders*. The Jewish leaders were concerned that Jesus' disciples weren't keeping their rules and traditions. Even though their rules and traditions shouldn't be given much authority, over time, these Jewish leaders gave their own words and traditions as much authority as the Bible. What looks like a petty accusation, in their minds was a very serious accusation because they were giving their traditions far too much authority — authority like the Bible itself.

To show you the kind of authority they have given to their own traditions, let me read you a few quotes from the Talmud.

"The words of the scribes are more lovely than the words of the Law... It is a greater crime to transgress the words of the school of Rabbi Hillel than the words of Scripture... My son, attend to the words of the scribes more than the words of the law." (Talmud)

They believed their tradition was more important than their Bible.

"Whoever is firmly implanted in the land of Israel, who speaks the holy language, who eats his food in purity [as required by hand-washing rituals], and recites the Shema morning and evening, is assured of life in the world to come." (Shabbat 1:3)



The Talmud says if you live in Israel, speak Hebrew, do the ritual hand washing, and say the Shema morning and evening, you will be saved.

Repentance for sin is not necessary. It doesn't matter what is happening in your heart.

Whoever has his abode in the land of Israel and eats his food with washed hands may rest assured that he shall receive eternal life. (Rabbi Tahaneth)

This rabbi says you are on your way to heaven as long as you ritually wash your hands and live in Israel. That shows you the kind of importance the Pharisees had attached to their traditions, in particular, the tradition of ritual hand washing.

Other rabbis taught that a demon named Shibtah sat on men's hands while they slept. If you did not ceremonially wash your hands the demon could get inside you and you could become demon-possessed. How is that for motivation to ceremonially wash your hands? Wash your hands or risk being demon-possessed. I am sure that scared every junior high boy into a ritual hand washing before every meal.

### **Jesus took on traditions that came before God's Word.**

And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, " 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!" Mark 7:6–9 (ESV)

Jesus responded to the Jewish leader's claim that his disciples were out-of-line because they were not washing their hands according to the traditions of the elders with a quote from the book of Isaiah. There are two main points Isaiah

makes in these words that Jesus wants us to know. We will look at the first point briefly, because we will come back to that topic for the entire sermon next week.

We will spend the balance of our time on the second point.

**They were about lip worship, not heart worship, which led to useless worship.**

Isaiah said the people in his day were about lip worship, not heart worship. That means they were more concerned with what worship looked like on the outside, than what was actually taking place with God on the inside of men's and women's hearts. That concern with the rituals of external worship to the neglect of genuine heart worship was also happening in Jesus' day with the scribes that were more concerned with people washing their hands properly than they were about someone's personal relationship with God.

This is still a common problem today. It is easy to go through the external rituals of worship while ignoring genuine internal worship. For example, when we come to church and sing songs, God doesn't care if we sing songs with our lips. What matters is if we are engaging in worshipping and adoring God with our hearts. When you sing, your mouth may be moving but what matters is what is happening in your heart. Are the words of the song helping you form words of worship to God from your soul?

Sometimes people tell me they like the music at church. When I ask them what they like about the music, they tell me they like the melody. We need to sing a song more than because we like the tune. The problem is music must have good words that helps us form the worship and gratitude of our hearts into the words that flow from our lips.

The same thing can happen when we are studying the Bible together. When a pastor is teaching, your body may face forward but it is easy for your mind to drift. Are you thinking about the movie we saw on Saturday night? Are you anticipating the sports you will watch Sunday afternoon? Are you planning a meal because you have people coming over for lunch? God doesn't want lips that sing words. He wants hearts that genuinely love him and want to follow him. God detests when people just go through the motions of worship. He wants our hearts. That was the problem with the Jewish leaders who were more concerned about ritual washings than the heart. It can also be a problem for you and me. Look how the Bible says God wants our heart.

Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" Mark 12:29–30 (ESV)

Next week, we will spend we will spend the entire sermon examining the topic of heart worship versus lip worship. It will be a very important message.

The other thing Jesus talked about was how traditions can actually lead us away from the Bible.

**Traditions that take on authority like the Bible, will lead us away from the Bible.**

This is a scary thought. The Jews in Isaiah's day and the Jews in Jesus' day gave their traditions the same level of authority as the Bible. As a result, they were putting their traditions in front of God's words. Remember, that was not the original intent of these traditions. The traditions of the elders started with a good purpose. They were to be a fence around the law to protect the law, but over time

they took on a level of authority that replaced God's laws. When our traditions take on a level of authority like God's Word, they will lead us away from God's Word. That happened in the time of Isaiah. That happened in the time of Jesus. It still happens today.

Jesus gave us an example of what this looks like in action.

### **Coban is an illustration of tradition coming before the Bible in Jesus' day.**

For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban" ' (that is, given to God)— then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do." Mark 7:10–13 (ESV)

Jesus gave us an illustration of how this took place in his day. It comes from Corban. Corban is the Hebrew word for offering. Corban was similar to the concept of deferred giving where a person gives part or all of their possessions to a charity upon his or her death. Corban was a tradition the rabbis developed to increase the amount of money at the temple. Once someone declared his property to be Corban, the priest discouraged anyone from withdrawing it from the Corban vow. Once property was dedicated Corban, you were also not allowed to give that property away or sell it and use the profit for another. You could still use it for yourself, but the rabbis said it technically belonged to God so that if you weren't using it for yourself, you couldn't give it away to someone else.

The problem is that Exodus 20:12, which is right out of the Ten Commandments, tells us children must honor their parents. That means adult children have a responsibility to honor and care for their aging parents. That commandment is not primarily written to little children but spells out the

responsibility adult children have when it comes to taking care of their aging parents. That is a very important responsibility. It is one of the Ten Commandments. Other parts of the Old Testament tell us that children who dishonor their parents could be subject to the death penalty. Honoring and caring for aging parents is a very serious responsibility in God's eyes. Remember there was no Social Security system in that day. When your parents were too old to work, if you didn't provide for them, they were on the street.

If someone had dedicated their possessions as Corbin, the rabbis would not allow people to sell their possessions and use the money to care for their aging parents. "Mom and Dad, I know you are struggling to make ends meet but my money is dedicated to God. It has a higher calling."

Here we see our key point in action. When our traditions rise to the same level of authority as the Bible, they will lead us away from the Bible. Let me give you another example.

### **The Catholic Church is an illustration of tradition coming before the Bible in church history.**

We just passed the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation. One of the key issues of the Reformation was the place of tradition in the church and how much authority tradition held compared to the authority of the Bible. The reformers, such as Martin Luther, felt tradition should not be on the same level as the Bible. They quoted the passage we are studying in Mark 7 to make their point. The Catholic Church felt church tradition and the Bible should be considered of equal authority and tradition should occasionally be given greater authority than the Bible.

To demonstrate my point, let me give you some quotes from the Catholic Church about the authority tradition holds.

“Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. [Therefore both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence.](https://www.catholic.com/tract/scripture-and-tradition)” <https://www.catholic.com/tract/scripture-and-tradition>

“It is an article of faith from a decree of the Vatican Council that Tradition is a source of theological teaching distinct from Scripture, and that it is infallible. It is therefore to be received with the same internal assent as Scripture, for it is the word of God.” (Attwater, p. 41). Catholic Scholar

The Catholics believe their traditions are infallible. They believe they have the same authority as the Bible and can even supersede the Bible. They believe their traditions are the very words of God.

That was the problem with tradition in Isaiah’s day, in Jesus’ day, and here we find the same problem in church history. Every time we put our traditions on the same level of authority as the Bible, they will lead us away from the Bible. That is what has happened to the Catholic Church. Let me show one way that happened in the Catholic Church.

### **The authority of tradition gave the Catholic Church a different Bible.**

Some of you know Catholics have a different Bible than Protestants. Their Bible has more books, such as Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Baruch, and the Wisdom of Solomon, to name a few. How did those books become part of the Catholic Bible? Why aren’t they in the Protestant Bible?

The Bible we hold in our hands are the same Bible used for more than the first 1,000 years of church history. In the Middle Ages, some Catholic priests began teaching from old books that were written before the New Testament was

written but were never considered as part of the Bible for the first 1,000 years of church history. Martin Luther and other reformers protested that it was wrong for some priests to preach from old books that the church never considered the Word of God.

To handle the issue, the Catholic Church convened the Council of Trent in 1546 where it decided to add a number of those books to the Bible.

Of course the reformers protested. What right do you have to change the Bible and add books to the Bible that the church for more than 1,000 years has stated are not part of our Bible? The answer of the Catholic Church was that the tradition it creates is so authoritative that it can use its tradition to add new books to the Bible, thereby placing its tradition not on equal standing with the Bible but over the Bible, to the point that it feels it can change the Bible.

It is the elevation of tradition above the Bible that led to the Catholic Church's beliefs in purgatory, that the mass conveys grace, and a number of others beliefs that are not found in the Bible.

### **What Protestant traditions are occasionally placed in front of the Bible?**

Giving tradition authority over the Bible didn't just happen in the Old Testament in Isaiah's time. It didn't just happen in the New Testament in Jesus' time. It didn't just happen in church history for the Catholic Church, but it is still happening today in the Protestant church.

How are we putting our traditions before our Bible? Let me give you a few examples. The first will be funny, but the last one is serious.

## **One Cup Communion vs. Multiple Little Cups**

In the 1800s, many congregations administered communion from one cup. Everyone drank from the same cup. That wasn't a problem in a small group but when you had a few hundred people in the church and you were the last guy in the communion line, most of communion was other people's backwash. At that moment, you were hoping the wine was strong and had a lot of alcohol.

As a greater understanding developed about the way diseases are communicated, churches started serving communion in individual containers. Some people didn't like that change. It even led to some congregations splitting because they refused to change from the tradition of one cup. It is sad to hear of churches splitting over this issue when the desire to use individual cups was to stop the spread of disease and better love our brothers and sisters, which was the very thing Christ commanded us to do.

## **Sunday Night Services**

Should churches have a Sunday night service? I grew up in a church that had a Sunday night service. We were always at the Sunday night service. As culture changed, most churches moved away from Sunday night services to a small group ministry. When that cultural shift happened, some people were very upset Sunday night services went away because that was their tradition. They believed every good church must have a Sunday night service at church. They held that tradition so strongly that it caused some people to leave their churches because of it.



I ask you, does the Bible say we must have a Sunday night service? No, it doesn't. A Sunday night service is a tradition, not a biblical truth.

### **The Presence of a Pulpit**

One church I served in struggled over the use of the pulpit. The church had a modest stage. Decades before, the church installed a large pulpit up front because it placed a high value on the preaching of God's Word. Over time, when the choir was disbanded and the church began using a worship team, it was difficult when the large pulpit took up a third to half of the entire stage! The elders came before the church to discuss removing the pulpit and replacing it with a small lectern. The congregation voted in favor of the change. The Sunday came men in the church worked to take the pulpit off the stage. They put it off to the side on the floor below.

Guess what showed up back on stage next Sunday? The pulpit! Those who dissented in the church vote came in one night during the week and put the pulpit back on stage. Why did they do this? They believed every good church must have a large pulpit in the church. Their love for the tradition of the pulpit caused them to violate the clear biblical command of Hebrews 13, which commanded them to submit to their leaders.

Whenever we raise tradition to a level of authority like the Bible, our traditions will begin to replace the Bible in our lives.

### **The Style of Worship**

Probably the biggest tradition Protestant churches stumble over is the worship styles we enjoy. When a church tries something new in worship and

pushes us out of our comfort zone, it is easy to get upset. Music style isn't a biblical issue. It is a preference issue often tied to the traditions we grew up with and tend to prefer. The Bible tells us we have great freedom when it comes to worship music. In Ephesians, it tells us we are to speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Unfortunately, it doesn't take long for brothers and sisters in Christ to start treating one another in very ungodly ways when their music traditions are violated. Someone's true spiritual maturity is seen when he or she gets uncomfortable over a music issue in the church. How will they handle it? Will they gossip to other people? Will they say hateful things about their brothers and sisters in Christ? Will they use the prayer cards to send anonymous hate mail to the pastor each week? Yes, I get those anonymous letters and my shredder works.

The tradition of worship cuts both ways. Just as we can give too much importance to a worship style of the past, we can also give too much importance to a newer worship style that is just beginning to get popular. It is easy to give more importance to a newer, hip style of worship than we give to the Bible itself. When we do that, we end up alienating people rather than loving people. We end up leading worship for ourselves in a room instead of for the people that are in a room. A preferred worship style from our past or a preferred worship style of the future can both be a traditions that we elevate over the clear teachings of Scripture.

While the Bible doesn't tell us a right or wrong style of worship, it does clearly tell us how we are to treat one another when we have disagreements over issues like worship.

**We are to love one another.**

...this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 1 John 3:11 (ESV)

We should be known for how much we love each other. You don't know how much you love someone until it is hard to love them and you disagree with them. It is when people are hard to love that you find out if you truly love them.

**We are to humbly serve one another.**

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. John 13:14 (ESV)

Washing feet means we are to be known for serving one another. Washing feet is the lowest, most humbling form of service. We are to be known for serving other people in extravagant ways and for putting ourselves in the position of greatest humility to offer our service. Instead of insisting on a tradition or preference we want, we should be known for serving other people and gladly sacrificing ourselves for what they want and need.

**We are to place other people before ourselves.**

Live in harmony with one another... Romans 12:16 (ESV)

We are to be known for how hard we work to get along with one another and work together. We are not to be known for breaking up relationships because we have differences with people over a preference or tradition.

**We are put up with one another in love.**

...bearing with one another in love..., Ephesians 4:2 (ESV)

This means we are to be known for being patient with one another. Bearing with one another means we put up with people when they are hard to put up with. We are patient and kind with people when situations become tense.

**We are to be quick to forgive one another and not hold a grudge.**

...forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

We are to be known for our willingness to forgive one another and not hold a grudge against one another. We are to forgive other people as freely and as completely as Christ forgives us.

## **Conclusion**

1. While traditions are not wrong, we need to be careful the place we give them. It is easy to elevate them to a place where we consider them just as important as the Bible. When we treat our traditions like they are the Bible, we will always walk away from the Bible.
2. At CrossWinds, let us not be a church that is known by its reputation for following the traditions of the past or for chasing the fads of the future. We want to be known for obeying what the Bible tells us, which is loving, serving, caring, forgiving, being patient with others, and putting them before ourselves. Those are the commands of Scripture. They are far more important than any preference or tradition we prefer.

We are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. When the bread and cup are passed, I want us to talk with God about the traditions and preferences in

our lives. Have you given them a place of too much importance so that when your traditions are ruffled, you treat your brothers and sisters in an ungodly way? If the Lord convicts you of sin in this area, when you are holding the bread and the cup, before we take them together, repent of that sin and ask God for his forgiveness. He will give it. Then we will take communion together as a church family because the Jesus that unites us must always be greater than any traditions which divide us.



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