

honesty and integrity: AMEN.

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Christ and Culture

Thank God in prayer for the good things about culture, such as the sense of identity and belonging which we may find within different aspects of our cultural life such as the arts, music, history. Thank God for those who have contributed to your own cultural life, especially if those people have been Christians openly working for the glory of God.

## Meditation

Start by listening carefully;

*Hear the voice of the Lord, and determine to walk in His ways.*

Next, learn wisely;

*Know the commandments of the Lord, which are a light to your path.*

Plan realistically;

*Measure yourself against the righteousness of God, as found through Christ*

Work diligently;

*May the work of your hands be pleasing to the King in His Kingdom.*

Evaluate shrewdly;

*With godly discernment, throw out what is bad and promote what is good.*

Share judiciously;

*For the Lord has charged us to love one another and share everything in love.*

And then, speak boldly;

*For the preaching of the Gospel is effective when done by those who have lived it.*

## Bible Study - Mark 7:1-13

<sup>1</sup> Now the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had been brought from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, <sup>2</sup> and observed that some of his disciples were eating bread with hands which they considered unclean, because they had not been washed. <sup>3</sup> The Pharisees and all Jews were not supposed to eat without ceremonially washing their hands, and keeping the 'tradition handed down by their ancestors'. <sup>4</sup> After coming from the market-place, they were not supposed to eat without ritual washing of cups, pitchers and bowls (and also beds) <sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'why do you conduct yourselves according to the traditions of the ancestors, but eat bread with ritually unclean hands?' <sup>6</sup> He said to them. 'Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites; as it is written;

*"These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are distant; they are far away from me. <sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain, teaching human traditions as if they were doctrines."*

<sup>8</sup> You have abandoned the commandments of God but cling to human traditions!

a longer dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees which includes today's. It begins with a strong attack on Jesus and His disciples contains an extensive reply from Jesus. We are left in no doubt ministry, He found Himself moving further away from the Judaism of

In reading what Jesus said, you gain the impression that these Pharisees and scribes saw the great distance that had opened up between the nationally or locally. Jesus was a Jew, and as 'the truth about what God required of His people. He also knew God meant and how they were supposed to be interpreted, but He leaders of His day, the Pharisees, reflected the will of His Father.

The Pharisees placed great weight upon the 'traditions' of Judaism look at why the Pharisees felt it necessary to develop these 'traditions' understand what Jesus said then we must know something about the Pharisees both accepted that what was written in the Old Testament although the Old Testament does not give evidence of this, they believed all written by Moses. He, after all, had received the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20,34, Deut. 5). Quite understandably, traditional interpretations concerning the years which applied them to the real life situations in which discussed and agreed by scholars (a process called 'Halakah'), at various ways (sometimes called 'Midrash', meaning 'commentary').

The Pharisees and scribes began by enquiring why Jesus' disciples laws which required ritual washing before eating (7:5). This was the food that was eaten and the one who ate were both 'holy', sacred act which kept a person alive; and in addition, the rituals people, the Jews, from all other people (Gentiles). Mark explained rituals (7:3,4), but then went on to record Jesus' reply. He began to Halakah and Midrash using a quote from Isaiah (Is 29:13 – see about God's desire for His people to worship Him with their hearts from His instructions' (7:7). Jesus therefore used this passage to abandoned the commandments of God but cling to human traditions. In the last part of our reading, Jesus took His objection further, that against any development of the religious traditions which contradict principles laid down in Scripture. He took as His example concerning gifts given to the Temple in Jerusalem, called 'corban', see that Jesus appears animated; you could even say angry, as He knew His Father wanted His people to worship Him because they had to obey the details of religious rituals!

## Going Deeper

When we delve into a passage like this which deals with the difficulty today in empathising with those who felt it necessary to follow traditions, we must take care to think through what was going on then rather than

Alexander the Great in around 320 BC). Jewish people abhorred Greek cultural performance and conservative Jewish High-priestly families entered into arrangements with the Romans after them the Romans, to run independently those parts of Israel occupied by the Romans. However, there was an increased sense of national identity for two important reasons. Firstly, King Herod the Great (40BC to 4BC) gained a sufficient degree of autonomy from the Romans to undertake the Temple complex in Jerusalem during his reign. This was the Temple Jesus affirmed the validity of his own life (which began in Herod's reign – see Matt 2:1f.), and we will return to the Temple in the last part of the study. The other development happened around the same time being the growth of the Pharisees as a religious/political party within Judaism. The Pharisees pursued their aims exclusively and rigorously, and when Judaism after Pentecost, the Pharisees were soon in total control of Judaism. It is not at all surprising therefore that 'scribes from Jerusalem' came to do the Pharisees. They had come to pronounce on whether Jesus and His followers were keeping the law' as they understood it. In those days, many rural Jewish people as we are ignorant of many of the laws within our own countries today. We by our lack of knowledge of our own laws when we accidentally break them, happened to Jesus' disciples. Some of them were working fishermen, and they were disobeying the detail of laws which had little relevance to them. When fishing, the tasks of workmen, they did not prepare to eat their food by ritually cleaning a pre-prepared 'fist sized' amount of ritually purified water (the technical meaning part of verse 3) put aside for the purpose in the boat, quarry or carpenter's shop. Jesus sprung quickly to the defence of His disciples (despite their recent see 6:52) with a quote from Isaiah which spoke of the primary need for love between God and His people, not human laws (see above). Although the us who are Jesus' followers of a later generation, the scribes would have Jesus' reply. For them, no Scripture was more important than 'the Law, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), and the 'traditional' interpretation they had created themselves, not even the work of the prophets! Jesus' was different. He almost always used the prophets (and nearly always Isaiah, Gospels) to interpret Scripture rather than tradition. Jesus believed that it was who connected with the heart of His Father.

**The law versus tradition, and the strange issue of 'corban'**

It is quite clear that in all these comments by Jesus it was the principles of which were important. However, in the second half of today's passage, Jesus took forward in His argument in order to embarrass His accusers, the scribes and the Pharisees. It is fairly clear as you read through the passage (verses 9 to 13) that Jesus was the Pharisees about their allowance of something called 'corban'. This

Many would argue with my interpretation of these texts, but I see evidence together with what we know about the days of Jesus is : case of the scholars disciples and were easily able to do so. But they were unable had failed to establish religious traditions which honoured God and kept the laws. His people and His people to love their God. I suspect the only caught out of the church denominations (including st and fewer church people today feel happy giving money to church, and they were fishing, and they were fishing, or going about the real challenge of Jesus' words in this passage is directed to a according to God's laws. Even now, with the salvation of Jesus Christ the moral compass provided by God in the Old Testament Commandments, but also in the rest of the 'Law'. Through Christ, to access Heaven and walking in holiness, but w the Law is still the basis of how the world works, and if we live accordir within the life of the books of the Bible, we will not go wrong. There are only a few and some cultural issues to which we cannot re before our Lord and ask Him to help us understand it. It is my experier

as in most of the that ritual washing before eating may be a gc as the prophets better at worshipping God with our hearts What is the difference in our worship since then?

3. How important is tradition to how Christians practice their

**Discipleship**

And the Pharisees will tell you what rules and guidelines you think would be essential or practices which w