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Sermon Notes

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Jesus Declared All Foods Clean

Mark 7:19

I. The Most Important Parenthetical Statement in the Bible

A. What is a “Parenthetical Statement”?

1. One that’s in parentheses
2. So, in almost every English translation, the verse we’re looking at this morning is in parentheses

Mark 7:19 (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

3. A parenthesis is a modern grammatical convention... it looks like the mouth in a smiley-face turned sideways... one way or the other
4. It is used to add some extra information to a statement... something incidental, something beside the point
5. Beside the point means IT ISN’T THE MAIN POINT, not the main idea
6. Generally something you can get along without, like a footnote or something for those who are really interested in a lot of extra information

B. Expository Preaching: “The Main Point of the Passage is the Main Point of the Sermon”

1. So for the most part, expository sermons avoid sidetracks, avoid burdening the hearer with all kinds of extra information

2. “Stick to the point!!!” a preaching expert would say to a young preacher

C. The Main Point of this Passage: The Darkness of the Human Heart

1. Jesus has been addressing the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law, the fanatical religious legalists and formalists and hypocrites of his day
2. They had a whole made-up system of religion, man-made regulations that were added to the Laws of God, that they forced on people’s consciences
3. In this case, it was ritualistic HANDWASHING... as a part of an overall system of ritual washings nowhere commanded in the Laws of Moses, the Laws of God
4. They were just extra rituals that had been passed down from previous generations of men just like them... rabbis who bound people’s consciences with all these traditions

Mark 7:3-5 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) ⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

5. Jesus exposed their fundamental flaw: preferring their man-made traditions over the Word of God

Mark 7:6-8 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' ⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

6. God’s Word is the standard, not man-made traditions
7. Jesus exposed that as TERRIBLE... deadly for their souls

8. But then... Jesus unleashed this bombshell for all to hear

D. Jesus' Bombshell: Externals Cannot Defile You OR SAVE YOU

Mark 7:14-15 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"

1. Typical... Jesus just makes the pronouncement to the crowd without any explanation
2. The full implication would not become clear for decades
3. But the King of the Kingdom of Heaven just lays out this timeless principle
4. NOTHING OUTSIDE YOU CAN MAKE YOU UNCLEAN...
5. All human uncleanness comes from INSIDE
6. By implication, Jesus will make it clear also that nothing EXTERNAL can CLEANSE you either...
7. Spiritual defilement comes from within; so true cleansing must be internal as well
8. BUT Jesus made none of this clear to the crowds

E. Full Explanation to the Insiders

Mark 7:17-23 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸ "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'?" ¹⁹ For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") ²⁰ He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'" ²¹ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

F. The Main Point Here: All Human Defilement Comes from Our Hearts

1. That was the main point of last week's sermon
2. The darkness and evil of our hearts is the true problem of the human condition
3. Therefore, nothing outside of a person can defile them
4. The human heart is a poisoned fountain
5. What is "The Heart"?
 - a. The part of you that studies, learns, thinks, reasons, plans, loves/hates, feels emotions, makes choices
6. The heart is the center of the entire human experience

Prov. 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

7. What does that mean, "The wellspring of life?"
 - a. Well, everything to do with the human life comes from the heart
 - b. It is likened to a spring of water... a wellspring that flows up and out into everything we do
 - c. We are told to GUARD it carefully!!
 - d. BUT Jesus says it is ALREADY POISONED... defiled
 - e. No foods caused that defilement, nor the uncleanness of hands
 - f. The defilement is SPIRITUAL; no external regulations can make it better or worse

G. OH By the Way...

1. This is where the parenthetical statement comes in
2. Gospel writer Mark, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, stuck a significant historical banner in this moment

Mark 7:19 (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

3. WOW!! It is difficult to overstate the importance of this moment
4. Amazingly, Mark is the only Gospel writer who gave us this aside
5. It's like... "Wait... What?!!" "Did you hear that? Did he just say what I thought he said?!!"

H. Significance

1. Jesus had been levelling the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law for preferring their traditions to the Laws of God
2. BUT HERE, Jesus is specifically ending the jurisdiction of some clear laws of God given through Moses... specifically claiming that those laws given by God were now obsolete
3. Thus... this sermon!!

II. Food Laws Established, Powerless, Fulfilled, Obsolete

A. Food Laws Established

1. God did in fact restrict the diet of the Jewish nation
2. Here are some examples
 - a. The first mention of dietary restrictions

Leviticus 10:10-11 You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹ and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses."

Then... Leviticus 11 lays out the whole thing:

Leviticus 11:1-8 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² "Say to the Israelites: 'Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: ³ You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud. ⁴ "'There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. ⁵ The coney, though it

chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. ⁶ The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. ⁷ And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. ⁸ You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

In addition, the chapter excludes shellfish:

Leviticus 11:9-10 These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. ¹⁰ But anything in the seas or the rivers that has not fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is detestable to you.

The whole chapter lays out what is holy – Kosher foods; the word “kosher” comes from the Hebrew word for “clean” or “pure”

Leviticus 11:47 You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not

- b. The reason given for the distinction: to set the Jewish nation apart as holy to the Lord

Leviticus 20:25-26 "You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground-- those which I have set apart as unclean for you. ²⁶ You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

3. This was part of a larger set of God’s Laws that are commonly called “The Ceremonial Law”... laws that governed the religious life and social life of the Jews and marked them as a holy and “peculiar” people (KJV!!)

Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: ⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 14:2 for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

4. Central to the ceremonial laws was the animal sacrificial system... including all the rules for the Priests and Levites
5. But it also included circumcision... a main topic of debate by the early church
6. By these ceremonial laws, the Jews were set apart as a sacred people, and a barrier—a dividing wall—was set up between the Jews and all the Gentile nations on earth

B. Food Laws Powerless

1. However, the Book of Hebrews makes it plain that these ceremonial laws were powerless to save sinners
2. Jesus said plainly, nothing we eat can defile the heart

Mark 7:18-19 "... nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? ¹⁹ For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

3. Paul said the same thing

1 Corinthians 8:8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

4. Hebrews said that the Jewish ceremonial laws, including circumcision, animal sacrifice, and the food laws were **powerless**

Hebrews 9:9-10 the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

Hebrews 10:4 it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

5. Paul says the same thing in Colossians:

Colossians 2:21-23 [The regulations] "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? ²² ... are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

So, strict observance of dietary laws is POWERLESS to restrain lust as it is also powerless to CLEANSE THE CONSCIENCE of sin!

6. In fact, the whole law is declared powerless to save:

Romans 8:3 What the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.

Galatians 2:16 ... a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ... by works of the law no one will be justified.

C. Food Laws Fulfilled

1. So... why did God institute these laws to begin with?
2. As we've said, God did it to mark the Jews as a separate holy people
3. Why did he want to do that? To give the Savior of the world a locating address among all the people on earth

John 4:22 salvation is from the Jews.

4. Once the Savior came AS A JEW, following the Old Covenant laws (including all the dietary regulations), their purpose had been fulfilled

Galatians 3:19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

Matthew 5:17 [Jesus said] "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

D. Food Laws Obsolete

1. Now that Christ has come, all foods are clean for us... Jesus declared all foods clean as we've seen
2. Then he made it plain to Peter as well

Acts 10:10-15 [Peter] became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." ¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." ¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

3. The Apostle Paul made it plain as well:

Romans 14:14 As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself.

4. Paul specifically warns against legalists that seek to impose new dietary regulations

1 Timothy 4:3-5 They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. ⁴ For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

5. So... we Christians can eat any food we want... there is no spiritual contagion on any food

III. The Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ

A. Jesus' Amazing Authority

1. Stand in awe at the role of Jesus Christ to do this!
2. Over and over again in Mark's Gospel, we see the awesome authority of Jesus Christ asserted
 - a. In Mark 1, the authority of Jesus' teachings

Mark 1:22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

b. In Mark 1: authority over demons

Mark 1:27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-- and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

c. Then in Mark 2, Jesus linked his power over disease to his authority to forgive sins

Mark 2:10 the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

d. Later in that same chapter

Mark 2:28 the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

e. Then after Jesus stilled the storm with his voice, his disciples

Mark 4:41 asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

3. Jesus is LORD OF ALL...

4. When Jesus cleansed the Temple, he did so as the owner of that holy place, calling it MY HOUSE

Mark 11:17 "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

The chief priests and teachers of the law specifically challenged him about his authority to do all these things

5. After his resurrection, he will say

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Staggering assertion! Jesus rules over everything in the universe!!

6. In this declaration that all food are clean, Jesus is announcing his intention to fulfill all of the Mosaic ceremonial law and bring that era to an end... it will all be obsolete! The Laws coming down

from Almighty God on Mount Sinai and given to his servant Moses are now obsolete... because Jesus said so!

7. He is the only one who can do this!

B. Of All These, the Most Relevant is Jesus' Authority to Forgive Your Sins and Rule Your New Life

1. Jesus has the power to declare you forgiven from all your sins, past, present, and future
2. He also has the power to command your behavior... to lay out all the rules by which your new life in him should be conducted
3. Jesus is your Savior AND your LORD!

IV. The Greatness of Our Salvation in Christ

A. Jesus Declares US Clean!

1. When Peter had his vision of all the formerly unclean animals, God commanded him

Acts 10:15 "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

2. BUT the timing was vital! It was to be applied to Gentiles, to Cornelius and his family and all future Gentile converts to Christ
3. This was the lesson that God was teaching Peter... that, through faith in the blood of Christ, Gentiles can become CLEAN
4. He repeated this lesson clearly to the church leaders in Jerusalem:

Acts 15:7-9 Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

THAT was the lesson! Faith in Christ can purify our hearts... it can make US clean!

Titus 3:4-6 [God] saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior

B. Jesus Transforms Our Darkened Hearts

Ezekiel 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

C. Jesus Frees Us from Enslavement to Sin

John 8:34, 36 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.... ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Romans 6:18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

It is not religious rules and regulations and strict dietary laws that set us free from sin's defilements... it is faith in Christ!

D. Jesus Frees Us from Religious Bondage

1. Many religions in the world have strict dietary laws
2. Since non-religious people live for their stomachs, religions frequently restrict diets
 - a. Hindus are very strict about what they will eat and not eat; obviously all eating of beef is forbidden; many Hindus follow the principle of non-violence to become strict vegetarians
 - b. The same is true of many branches of Buddhism
 - c. Muslims basically follow the kosher laws of the Old Testament and do not eat pork; and at Ramadan, they fast entirely for a month during daylight hours
 - d. Jews will only eat kosher foods, of course

- e. Catholics still fast during Lent and don't eat meat on Fridays
 - f. Many cults follow dietary laws—Mormons won't drink caffeine or alcohol; Seventh-Day Adventists who are vegetarians, etc.
3. As we've already said today, Paul makes it very plain that such legalism is contrary to the gospel and useless in restraining sin

Colossians 2:21-23 [The regulations] "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? ²² ... are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Strictness in eating is hard to achieve and can lead to spiritual pride. Paul says it is worthless in saving our souls.

Jesus frees us from all such legalism!! We are free to eat any food we want any time we want

Now, of course, that doesn't mean that everything we eat is good for our physical health! That's a different matter! Some foods can make us fat or tend toward heart trouble, etc. If we are good stewards of the body, we will be careful what foods we eat and in what quantity.

E. Jesus Will Complete Our Perfection

- 1. All foods are destined to perish with use... as will our bodies themselves

1 Corinthians 6:13 "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"--but God will destroy them both.

- 2. No matter what we eat, at some point we will die and our bodies will be destroyed in the grave
- 3. But Christ will raise us up in glorious bodies and will perfect our salvation for all eternity

Philippians 3:21 Jesus, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

And in heaven, we will eat whatever they serve at the heavenly feast and delight in it!!