

MADRID CHURCH OF CHRIST

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2017

2017 ANNUAL THEME:

PUTTING ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

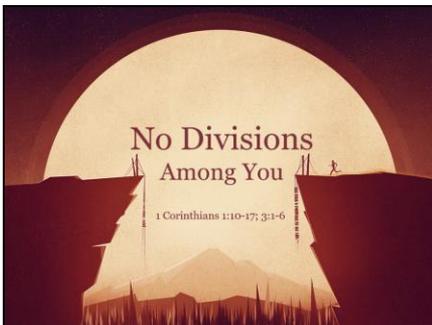


EPHESIANS 6:10-20

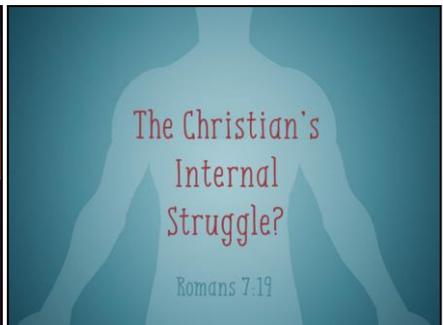
"PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL" (EPHESIANS 6:11).

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

9AM



11AM



"BE DILIGENT TO PRESENT YOURSELF APPROVED TO GOD AS A WORKMAN WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED, ACCURATELY HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH" (2 TIM. 2:4).

RIPPED OUT OF CONTEXT:

MARK 7:7

In our *Ripped Out of Context* sermons and articles, I have made it my goal to not look at how everyone else in the religious world misuses scripture, but how WE can be guilty of it at times. In some of the lessons and articles, I have looked at verses that even I have taken out of context in the past. The one that we are dealing with in this article is an example of one of the ones I have taken out of context the most.

In Mark 7:7 Jesus quoted Isaiah, saying, “In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” But what did Jesus mean about worshiping in vain? I’ve heard many people explain that “vain worship” is worshiping God in unauthorized ways, or when we worship the way we want instead of worshiping the way God has told us in His word. Unfortunately, I think that definition of “vain worship” ignores the context of Jesus’ words and gives the wrong impression about vain worship.

The Context – Jewish Traditions

Jesus was criticized by the Pharisees because His disciples ate food without first ceremonially washing their hands according to Jewish customs. In order to help his readers understand what was going on, Mark explained, “The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3). And he even added, “And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches” (Mark 7:4).

The Pharisees thought their strict customs and traditions were necessary in order to keep people from accidentally breaking the Law of Moses by eating something “unclean.” However, Jesus’ disciples were not observing these customs; which is why the Pharisees were very critical of them and of Jesus.

It’s important to recognize that nothing in the context is about worshiping “the way we want” versus worshiping “the way God has told us in His word.” That is an important discussion to have, but it is NOT the discussion Jesus was having with these Jews.

The Meaning of “Vain Worship”

The word, “vain” means “useless” or “empty.” It means “hollow” or “unsuccessful.” When Jesus used Isaiah’s words to criticize the people of His day, He wasn’t criticizing the way they were praying or singing. He was criticizing their hearts and the way they were living.

He went on to criticize the way they kept the custom of “Corban,” but disobeyed God’s command to financially provide for their parents. He said, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition” (Mark 7:9).

Jesus was saying, “All your words about honoring God are worthless. You say you love Him, but you don’t. Your religious piety is just a show you’re putting on for people. Your customs and traditions are for your own benefit; not because you actually love God.”

The Application – Vain Worship in Modern Times

I would certainly agree that we should worship God the way He says for us to worship and we should not invent unauthorized ways of worshiping. In fact, I could not agree with that more. But if we think avoiding “vain worship” is done by simply worshiping according to the rules, then there is a very good chance that we ourselves are truly guilty of vain worship.

Our worship is vain anytime we honor God with our lips, but we are more concerned with keeping the religious customs and traditions of our time than we are the actual commandments of God.

It’s interesting how many religious customs and traditions we have:

- What time we meet for worship on Sunday
- How many times we meet for worship on Sunday
- Whether or not we have a Wednesday Bible study
- How we dress when we come to worship
- Whether or not we offer an invitation at the end of a sermon
- The order of our worship
- Using song books and song leaders to guide our singing
- Passing around collection baskets during worship
- Owning a church building to worship in

I don't believe any of these traditions and customs are inherently wrong; just as the washing of hands in Jesus' day was not inherently wrong. But they become wrong when God's people are more concerned about keeping traditions and customs than we are things like:

- Loving our neighbor
- Loving our enemy
- Not slandering anyone (including political leaders)
- Not being greedy or covetous
- Not complaining

These are things God actually addresses and commands, but often we are more concerned with keeping our customs and traditions than we are obeying the actual commands of God. This is when we are truly guilty of "vain worship:" when, in essence, we view our own traditions as being equal (if not higher) in authority than God's laws. Mark 7:7 is one of those verses that we often use in order to show other people going to other churches with unauthorized worship that they are wrong, but how often do we actually make application to our own lives before God? Examine yourself. Examine your heart. Examine your life. The question isn't, "Do you worship according to the rules?" but rather, "Do your words and your life reflect true devotion to God?"

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 06/04 - Song Service @ 9AM
 - 07/30 – Next Invite Sunday - *The Best Possible News: Jesus is Risen*
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DAILY READING:

- **05/15** – Micah 5-7; Psalm 131
- **05/16** – Nahum; Psalm 132
- **05/17** – Habakkuk; Psalm 133
- **05/18** – Zephaniah; Psalm 134
- **05/19** – Job 1-3; Psalm 135
- **05/20** – Job 4-7; Psalm 136
- **05/21** – Job 8-10; Psalm 137



*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
-Psalm 119:105*