

## MARK 7:6-13      LIVE IN THE STORY

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' <sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." <sup>9</sup> And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' <sup>11</sup> But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), <sup>12</sup> then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. <sup>13</sup> Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Jesus does not scold the Pharisees and teachers for having traditions. He chastises them for holding to and enforcing traditions that are contrary to God's will as it is revealed in Scripture. Our relationship to tradition lies somewhere on a spectrum between rigid conservatism and *laissez faire* progressivism. While some in St. Paul's audiences (the antinomians) represented the latter, the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day were the poster children of the former. At either extreme, we are in trouble. The problem is that either extreme we are functionally relating to God's law in the same way. On the conserving side, we rationalize the law to make it fit our lives, thereby functionally annulling it. On the progressive end, we do away with the law by declaring it irrelevant to our lives. In religious circles, the progressive mistake is easier to see. That fact only makes the conservative mistake somewhat more dangerous.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century American culture, the mantra was, "Question authority." This often was followed by its corollary, "Do your own thing." In contrast, the attitude of the church should be, "Test authority." The corollary for this attitude would be, "Do God's thing." The Bible is the story of God's dealing with a people – believers in all times and places. It is a story about God's nature and his action to build a relationship with his people. As his people, it is our story. It is the story, rather than our experience, that should define our traditions. We test human religious authority as expressed in our traditions by seeing how they are consistent with and support the story of God and his people. Of course, to do so successfully we need to know the story. Attend church and study the Bible with an ear for hearing the story so that you can apply it to daily living.

**O God, immerse me in your story so that I might come to know you better and be able to obey you more fully. Keep me from a deadly traditionalism that has sucked the life out of my faith. Help me to be in a living relationship with you and your story through your Word. Give me the wisdom to apply your story in my life. Amen.**