

Questions for reflection & discussion

Summarize the message in your own words.

- What stood out for you?
- What are some of your favourite traditions?

Read **Mark 1:1-8**

- Why were the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law upset about Jesus' disciples eating with unclean/unwashed hands?
- Why was Jesus so tough on them in his response?
- Do you think these words could apply to Christians today? To our church? To you?
- If someone shared with you that they feel they honour God with their lips but in reality, their heart is far from God, what would you suggest they do to change this situation?
- Are there ways in which the church (generally) today is more concerned about holding on to the 'traditions of men' rather than 'the commands of God'?
 - In what sense are traditions good?
 - How do you / we decide this?
- What does it mean to worship God in vain?

Quoting **Isaiah 29:13** Jesus refers to these people as hypocrites.

- Although they honour God with what they say, their hearts are far away from God.
- Although they worship God, it is without meaning.
- Although they teach, they are teaching not God's rules, but men's.
- They have let go the commands of God and hold on to the traditions of men.

Beyond the pretence of hypocrisy is the deeper issue identified in the last two accusations.

- To what extent are these four accusations made by Jesus applicable to current Christianity?

Read **Mark 7:9-22**

- What are some creative ways which people (you) twisted God's word to make it look like you're doing something for him which gets you out of doing something you should have done for someone else?

The heart of the matter is that the heart is the matter! Eating stuff is not going to impact your relationship with God. But what is in your heart will!

- What would you say to someone who says – 'look – most people are basically good'?
- What is the significance of Mark's aside in **v19**?
- How would you help someone who realises the state of their heart and wants to do something about it?
- In what way(s) is the passage about more than behaviour modification?

Jesus warns that our desire to check off a list of virtues, good deeds, and right actions, is missing the mark.

- i.e. serve at a soup kitchen because it seems like the "right" thing to do? Or to connect with and show care for others?
- Do you read the Bible because that's what you're supposed to do? Or do you read out of an honest and insatiable desire to encounter God?
- What passages / scenes later from Acts and the letters does this passage invoke?