

Pastor Jason Epperson, Mark 7:1-23

■ Scripture Callout

■ Program Summary

Pastor Jason Epperson opens Mark 7:1-23 by asking how we view the world and what signs we notice each day. The religious leaders saw Jesus' miracles, but focused on outward traditions like handwashing instead of recognizing the work of God in front of them.

The message reminds listeners that the greatest battlefield is often in the mind. Our enemy is not other people, political opponents, family members, or those who disagree with us. Jesus has won the victory, and believers are called to renew their minds, watch for God's fingerprints, and live as His image bearers.

Pastor Jason also encourages fathers and families not to give up. Instead of responding with anger, passivity, or discouragement, we are called to reflect the love of the Father and take steps of faith that help us see God's faithfulness.

■ Key Takeaways

The battlefield is often in our minds, not in the people around us.

Jesus confronts traditions that become more important than transformed hearts.

God's signs are all around us if we learn to look for them.

People are not the enemy; Christ has already won the victory over the real enemy.

Fathers and believers are called to reflect the love and character of God.

Taking a step of faith helps us see the faithfulness of God.

■ Scripture References

Mark 7:1-23 - Jesus confronts outward tradition and points to the condition of the heart.

Mark 7:8 - 'You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.'

Psalms 34:3 - 'Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.'

Romans 12:2 - Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

■ Quote of the Day

■ Broadcast Notes

This broadcast contrasts God's signs with the signs and boundaries people create to feel safe or superior.

The message challenges listeners to examine whether they are focused on outward appearances or the condition of the heart.

A special encouragement is given to men and fathers: do not quit, do not become passive, and do not try to demand respect through anger. Instead, reflect the Father by loving well.

The program points listeners toward a renewed mind, a bigger view of God's work, and a daily calling to be His image bearers.

■ Today's Challenge

■ Closing Prayer

■ Complete Transcript

We're glad you're here! We're glad you're here! Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're here, It's so good to see you, we hope that it's fair, Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here! Reading from Mark chapter 7, verse 8, You have let go of the commands of God, And are holding on to the traditions of men. Mark chapter 1, verse 8 O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together, It is Monday, June 29, 2026. How do you view the world, and what signs do you look for?

Today consider being God's image bare.

Here's a message preached a week ago Sunday by Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church. So today we are in Mark chapter 7, verses 1 through all the way through 23. In Mark 7, 1 through 23, it's an interesting part of the Bible, but honestly it's a moment in time when Jesus takes a step back, and he's pressed on by religious elite people, and Jesus says some things today in this passage that I promise you all of us in this room need to hear, not just the dudes, okay? And in this passage today, as we look at it, before we get into it, I want to point out a couple things.

The first is this, in your life you have two choices, and I'm setting this up because when you read about what the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, religious leaders do, it's kind of shocking, but I just want to point out before that sometimes it's also kind of shocking how we view the world. There's two ways to view the world, and David kind of said it, we can view through the lens of like you see it all, and you see like signs that God has given you that point to him, or you look at kind of man signs, and you constantly are seeing the things that are wrong all the way around you, right? It's like today I called my dad on the phone, and my dad has dementia, he just had a stroke, and the fact that I got to hear his voice, I'm going to say thank you for, but the fact that I couldn't have a conversation was hard. There's two ways to view the world, you with me? When I think about how my father taught me that as a young boy, is I remember the day in my house when I went to bed at night, and we were locking the front door, and there was a police officer sitting in front of my house, and I was young, I wasn't a junior higher yet, sometime in elementary school, I said, dad, why is there a police officer sitting outside of you? He goes, son, there's some people that don't like your dad right now, and they put some threats on our family, and so these police officers are going to be out here to protect us.

Like, I remember those weeks in my life when police officers sat in front of our house, because someone in our community threatened to kill my dad and my family, and I remember in those moments, my dad looked at it with a big picture, and once that person ended up in prison, guess what my dad did? My father taught me a lesson, is he went and ministered to that guy when he was in prison. See, that's a big picture view versus a small picture view. I remember another time with my family, this, you know, I grew up like in Iowa, I didn't grow up like in crazy places now, I mean, it's pretty crazy there, but I remember another time that my dad had preached a sermon, he was teaching God's word, and the next week we woke up every single morning with different graffiti all over our concrete in our driveway, and I remember my dad never complained about it, but instead of having his morning devotions, when I got up, I'd see him on his hands and knees scrubbing our concrete, because people hated him, because he actually believed God's word was true, and in that moment, he taught me lessons to view the world the way Jesus views the world.

Now, my dad was not perfect now, like I can give you other things that like, but all of us image God, whether you know God or not, there is good in you, and that good in you images God, whether they believe in God or not, they image God, and my dad did a good job of imaging God to me, but not a perfect job, I got good baggage and I got bad baggage y'all, we all do, but the reason I'm telling you these stories is because there is a big picture that we call life, and the battlefield was not against, the person that wanted to hurt my dad and hurt my family was not our enemy, the philosophies of the world that stand in direct contradiction to the ideals of scripture, like those people that believe those things, they're not my enemy, the people that hate you or hate me or persecute the church, listen to me, they're not our enemy, see our enemy was actually defeated, our enemy was defeated when Jesus came into this world, when he went to this cross, he died for your sins, he died for my sins, he rose from the dead, and before he rose from the dead y'all, he kicked down the doors of hell, he looked Satan in the eyes and said, you need to give me the keys of accusation, you are no longer have the ability to accuse my children, give me those keys, and in that moment hear me say, the victory was won, y'all we're on a, like we win, like he's been defeated, and so this concept that the enemy is people that disagree or philosophies that disagree or politics that disagree, the fact that those things we think are the enemy, is why as men and is why as women, we're very confused, the enemy is not your ex-husband or ex-wife, the enemy is not your husband or your wife, your enemy is not your children, your enemy is not the coach, it's not the team, the enemies are not people of different skin color, or different backgrounds or different belief systems, that is not the enemy, the enemy y'all has been defeated, the principalities of this world, Satan has lost, and really the greatest battle you have in this world, that's what we're gonna talk about today, the

greatest battle you have in this world, is not with the principalities, God's got that on locks, the greatest battle you have is in your own mind, it's here, that's the battlefield, and in this passage today, it is a direct, Jesus looking right at all of us in this room and saying, this is the battlefield, I have won the battle, how are you going to react to the philosophies of man? How are you gonna react to the hate that people pour on you? How are you gonna react to the prejudice? How are you gonna react to people hating you and not treating, like how are you going to react when you're disrespected by your children, or if you're disrespected by a friend, like I can't control the battlefield, but I can't control the people that say the things, but I can control my mind, because God's given me, it says, be transformed by the renewing of your mind, mind, mind, so let's talk about that today, it says it this way, so Jesus has done all these miracles, let's fast forward, like Jesus has done all this crazy stuff, all these crazy miracles, like I mean guys, crazy miracles, like he is literally a girl was dead, she's risen from the dead, he's healed the blind, he's healed the leper, a paralytic dropped through a roof, and guess what? All these religious leaders, they saw it now, the people you're about to talk about, they saw the miracles, they heard about him walking on water, they saw, they didn't see him getting on a boat, and he got to the other side, they were there when he fed 5000 people, like they saw all the miracles, you with me? Don't miss it, they saw all the miracles, and this was what they did, in chapter 7 verse 1, now when the Pharisees gathered to him, and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands, that were defiled, that is unwashed, for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat, unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the traditions of elders, so basically what happened is, it is healthier to wash your hands before you eat, right? When my kid goes to the bathroom, I was like bro, wash your hands, you tell him to wash their hands, like before you eat food, if I'm shaking hands with all of you, and then I run to eat somewhere, guess what I try to do first? Wash my hands, because I don't know if you wash your hands, so I'm not saying washing your hands is bad, I'm not saying that like, brushing your teeth is bad, like those are good things to do, that's not what Jesus is saying is, but these religious leaders were so consumed, with them not washing their hands, they saw all the miracles, and the question they ask is, why don't you wash your hands? And when they came to the marketplace, they did not eat unless they wash, and there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups, and pots, and copper vessels, and dining plates, all the miracles around them, you with me? They just saw him take a McDonald's happy meal, and feed 5,000 people with it, and their question is not, how did you split that Big Mac up? Their question is, why didn't you wash your hands after you did it? We walk in this room, we walk into our schools, we walk into our homes, we walk down the street, and God is all around us, but what questions do we ask? And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, why do your disciples not walk according to the traditions of the elders, but eat with defiled hands? Guys, I just, I want you to just, the battlefield is where? In your life right now, this morning when I woke up, and I'm outside on my deck, and I'm watching the sun come up, and the day before Lacey said, hey, do you see this? She shows me this spider web that's smaller than my thumb, and there's this little spider, and she took a picture with her iPhone. By the way, those iPhones, they can take good pictures now. Side note.

And she shows me, because my eyes, I couldn't even hardly see it, and watching the dew on this, I mean, it was like national geography, it was like in my own yard. Then watching my dogs run around and play, and watching the birds, and watching the earth wake up all around me, and the signs that it's like, this is who I am. This is the God of all creation, or I could have been frustrated that I had to wipe off my seat because the dew was really bad.

So there is signs all around us, and there are God's signs all around you and all around me, and those God's signs point to the creator of the universe, the sustainer of life, the savior of the world, looking at his kids no matter what they look like, and saying, I love you. There is signs everywhere, and the purpose of the church is to be the image of that sign. There's also signs in this world that are made by men.

I've made signs, you've made signs, we are walking signs sometimes. And those signs draw boundaries. Those signs make us feel safe.

Those signs, in some ways, in religious worlds, we build signs around us saying, don't do this, don't do this, don't do this, because it keeps us from something sinful. I get, I get it. But what those signs are is when you walk in and you see God do miracles all around you, and you're consumed with

someone not washing their hands.

The battlefield is in our minds. And the passage goes on, and you guys, when we look around this world, what we should see is all the miracles he does on a daily basis. Like, six months ago, I couldn't stand up.

This is the first today, six months later, I'm preaching like I used to preach. God does things, God heals today. I have prayed over your families, I have prayed with you, I've watched the healings, I've watched the relationships reconciled, I've watched freedom come over guilt and shame.

I've watched people who had different diseases, those diseases be eradicated and nothing can explain it except for the power of God. Like, there is signs everywhere. There's signs of a sunset and a sunrise after a massive storm.

There is signs when our farmers put dormant seeds in the dirt and it doesn't rain for a while, then it rains and now it rain won't shut off. And the reality is you look around and what's happening, it's growing. Those are signs from God saying, I'm here, I'm real, I love you.

Or you can be consumed with the boundaries that man set up, you can be consumed with the signs you disagree with and you can live your life being overwhelmed by the baggage of the satanic philosophies of the world. Or man, we can look at God's signs and just be geeked up that we know him. The people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Like so many years of my life, I really thought because I did this and someone did something different, I really thought I was better. No one said that to me, but that's what I thought.

It might have been healthier, but it doesn't mean I'm better. Jesus says it this way. They're like whitewashed tombs.

That's how Jesus describes it. Us as legalists is on the outside. We got the suit jacket on today, boy.

Yeah, but on the inside, we got a T-shirt that's too tight and there's stains on it. That's what's real. It's when you're driving in the car with the kids and this happens and I'm not judging it because it happens to us.

And everyone is ripping each other's hair out and you're yelling and you're screaming, you're angry. And then you walk up on the church lawn and it's like, we have arrived. You know my favorite kind of house to enter into? The people that I'm the closest to in the world have seen my laundry on the floor.

But for generations as a church, man, it had to be picked up. It had to be pretty. It had to be clean.

And because of that, half of culture thought I can never be a part of this because the signs of washing my hands. And I'm not. It's good to wash your hands.

It's good to wear a suit jacket. It's good to look nice. It's I'll be you.

But when other people have to be like, really, this is what they're saying. Here's a couple of statements. I just want to think about have you ever said this in your own head even? Why don't they just look like me? Why don't they dress like me? Why don't they act like me? Why don't you do what we do? That's what the Pharisees and Sadducees just asked Jesus.

You leave the commandments of God and hold to the traditions of men. And he said to them, you have a fine way of rejecting commandments of God in order to establish your tradition. For Moses said, honor your father and mother.

See, this is not man's signs. This is God's signs. OK, don't hear me say that.

God's word is God's signs. God said through Moses, honor your father and mother and like take care of them. And whoever reviles father and mother must surely die.

He's like, if you don't take care of the people who took care of you, something's broke. But you say this is what the Pharisees said. They changed it.

They said, well, if a man tells his father and his mother, whatever you would have gained from me is Corbin, which is if you this time in history, instead of taking care of your parents, you say, well, I'm going to give it to the temple. And if you give it to the temple, you don't take care of your parents. Then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother that's making void the word of God by your traditions that you've handed down and many such things you do.

But why would the temple have said, well, if you give your money to the temple, you don't have to give it to your parents because the temple wanted money. Like, let's just be honest. Why does the church say you can't squelch on your gift to the church? But man, you can squelch on your gift to the four of the widow and the orphan.

For me, this was convicting this week. On Wednesday night, the storms rolled through and everything was canceling in town. He didn't notice that the university was shut down at one o'clock.

Go home and house in place, right? That's what I mean. It was the storms were nasty. And this was the passage that I was supposed to preach.

And I just couldn't get over the fact of if there's ever been a passage that I want to talk to the addiction community. And if there's ever been a passage that I want to look my brothers and sisters in Christ that don't have homes in the eyes and teach, it's this one. And so I couldn't cancel.

I just couldn't do it. And I said to our staff, none of you have to come. We got to have someone there to dish up some food.

And if I can preach and Sarah, if you'll sing, we'll do it. And some of us showed up and we did it and watching a family push their child in a stroller to the venue and come out of the rain and they're soaking wet and there was finally safe. They're in a building and watching my buddies who are there every single week as I sit in a room and as the worship is playing and they said, Jason, thanks so much.

Or Pastor Jay, thanks so much for doing this. They told us to shelter in place, but what if you don't have a place? And for a lot of times in my life, I would have, I would have just thought about my own safety. I wouldn't have let Joe who's like one of my guys, like I love Joe.

Joe has made a decision that he literally, he's making a decision. I know it. And Joe knows that he, he wants to be homeless because the check that he does get, he wants to buy weed with versus he wants to pay rent with.

And Joe chooses to live on the streets. But that doesn't mean Joe can't stand and worship the Lord on a Wednesday night with me. It doesn't mean he can't minister to my heart.

It doesn't mean that he can't pass out communion and pray over someone. It just means he's doing something different with his resources than I would do. I don't think it's the healthiest way, but I'm going to love Joe where he's at.

Even from us as a staff, we're wrestling through this. It's like taking care of the orphans and the widows and the poor is commanded by God. And as a church, you all, we do the best we can.

And over 40% of what we do, we give away like I'm in. But even there, sometimes it's like, but if you won't do this, you know what I'm like? And we're not on this earth. Men, father is your purpose is to be the image of the father in heaven.

And you're going to screw it up. And when you do say sorry and he called the people to him again, man, it's hard to read when your allergies are acting up. And he called to the people to him again and said to them, hear me, all of you and understand there is nothing outside of a person by what's going into him that can defile him.

I want to read that again. I just want everyone to hear it. That does not mean God's like drink yourself to death because he doesn't want us to be drunkards.

It tells us that. But it does say this. And he called the people to him again and said to them, hear me, all of you and understand there there is nothing outside a person that going into him can defile him.

But the things that come out of a person are what defile them. And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him, hey, what are you talking about? And he said to them, then are you also without understanding you not see that whatever goes into a person from the outside can defile him since it enters not his heart, but his stomach and it's expelled. They can this time in history, they couldn't eat certain foods.

God told him, hey, don't eat these foods like don't eat pork, don't eat shrimp, don't eat these things because they couldn't cook. Like it made it make them sick. It wasn't best for them.

It's still not best for you to eat. Bacon y'all is good. And what Jesus is saying is, guys, you can't be unclean.

You can't be defiled based on what you take in because you eventually get rid of it. I don't need to get into that, right? We're good, but it's what comes out of us because the things you hear, the things you see, the things you whatever, it makes the battle harder for you. I'm not lying there now.

I can take something in. I can drink something. I can smoke and it makes it harder for me to fight the battle.

And that's why I don't do that because my battle is hard enough on its own. But what it's saying here is the battle is in your mind and the battle is not like what makes what defiles you, what breaks you is what comes out of you. But man, it makes me feel good when I don't do that.

That's what we did, right? That's what we do because I don't do this. Yeah, I struggle with that, but I don't do that. And he said, what comes out of a person is what defiles him from within.

Out of the heart of man comes evil thoughts, sexual morality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All evil things come from within and they defile the person. And what comes into your mind, what comes out of you, you will not have fresh water inside of you and saltwater come out.

When you got saltwater on it, when you got darkness on the inside, darkness comes out. When you got death that comes out of your mouth, there's a piece of your heart that is dead. That's just me shooting straight.

Well, Jason, you don't know how I was raised. You don't know about my dad. You don't, well, you don't.

My dad had weaknesses too. I told you a lot of good stories about my dad. He's a great dude now, but he had weaknesses too.

Fathers, I'm going to talk to you right now for a second. And this is what I want to say. I know you feel defeated.

I know you feel like you can't win. I know that when people look at you and you feel disrespected at first, you get angry and you want to lash out. And some of you keep doing that.

But eventually, because it's a game, you think you can't win. You just quit. It's called passivity.

It's why in the garden, Adam didn't lead and love Eve very well. It's why our culture today, like you can say what you want of why this culture is a hot mess. Man, I'm gonna be honest.

The reason culture is a hot mess is because, man, we're not being the fathers he's called us to be. Like I'm owning it. And I just want you to know, I know what it feels like to feel like a failure.

I know what it feels like to feel like you can't win. I know what it feels like to have one of your children look at you disrespectfully. And part of you wants to choke them out.

And the other part of you wants to run and hide. I know what it's like when your wife looks at you and she doesn't respect. I know what that's like.

But I've got two choices. I can quit or I can fight the battle. I don't fight the battle by yelling at my kids and demanding their respect.

I fight the battle the way the father would fight the battle. He doesn't demand my respect. He doesn't yell and scream at me.

He loves me into a relationship. I know it's hard to be a part of things or do things that you've never done. But I want to give you a quick illustration from you ladies and you men and you kids in the room.

Do you remember the first time that they handed you the keys and you jumped in a car and you were driving it? And all of a sudden you came up on the Mississippi River or whatever river or whatever bridge. For me, it was the Mississippi. And I remember looking at it was a two lane bridge.

And I saw a semi coming this way and I could not stop. And I remember grabbing the wheels at 10 and two and thinking, oh, dear Jesus. And I drove across that thing because that's back in the day when I actually had grates.

And I remember going by that vehicle. And after I passed it being like, I remember the first time driving a 15 passenger van in Washington, D.C., in New York City with a bunch of kids in the back of it driving in all these lanes and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And now, you know, how I cross the bridge.

Hey, kids. Hey, what are you watching back there? You understand what I'm saying? A step of faith teaches you the faithfulness of God. A step of faith allows you to realize God has created you for victory.

You know, the first time I walked up on a stage to preach, I was terrified. I hated public speaking. I would have rather walked up on a stage and sang a song than talk.

And I'm telling you right now, I would rather talk than sing a song. But the first time than the second time and the third time and every single time, bro, God showed up. And when God shows up, it builds my faith because the battlefield is in my mind.

The first time I walked into a hospital room and someone was dying and I'm 18 years old and I walk in and I'm 18. I'm on hospital call my dad and my dad couldn't make it. And I walk in, I'm holding someone's hand.

I'm praying over them as they're dying and everyone's crying. I was terrified. Now I walk into those rooms and I know the Holy Spirit is with me.

And when I walk in those rooms, I grab your hand and you grab my hand and we're going to go on a journey with the Lord together. We're going to walk that person into the kingdom of heaven. It's the first time that like you walk into a room and you have to talk.

Like I don't like I'm not this massive extrovert that loves meeting new people. The first time I realized I had to talk to someone new, I was terrified. But God was like, Jesus, go be my image.

Hey, family, men, fathers, don't quit. Look for the signs of God. Follow those signs.

Allow your heart to be filled with joy. But here's the deal, y'all. The reason we put up our own signs is to make ourselves feel good, even though we feel bad.

And my guess is you're tired of feeling bad, trying to feel good. But if you can look at the signs of God, you can recognize the battlefield is in your mind. The enemy is not other people.

Guess what? You're going to see the miracles of God not only around you, but in your own life. Being God's image bearer, what a high calling. You can do it.

Look at the signs. God wants to work in and through you. If you missed a portion of today's broadcast, want to hear it again or pass it on to a friend, stop by greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org and listen anytime under the Mark and Friends tab.

Thanks for listening. Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family. This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media.

God bless you and have a great day and night.

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