

## **April 19, read Mark 7**

"You Pharisees strain out a gnat and swallow a camel," reproved Jesus (Matthew 23:24). Mark 7 gives proof to the validity of that charge. The religious leaders were so concerned with ceremonial acts of cleanliness and purification they overlooked vital moral and spiritual issues. Isaiah predicted this when he wrote, "This people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition ..." (Isaiah 29:13).

An example of their twisted piety was in what Mark called "Corban." One has a scriptural obligation to look out for the well-being of his parents. Back then, however, a son would say to his father and mother, "I can't (won't) help you. I've already dedicated to God the money I might have used to care for you." And the Pharisees sanctioned that idea! Now to give to the Lord's work is commendable but that doesn't relieve one from his God-given duty to his parents.

Modern Christians may also fall into the error of believing that God is more interested in ritual than righteousness, in what they do rather than what they are. As evidence of their faith, they may point to their acts: church attendance, service on Christian boards and committees, financial support of various ministries and the like. Or they may brag of what they refrain from doing: cheating on their spouses; neglecting their families; abusing their bodies with alcohol, drugs, -nicotine or cholesterol and so on. Jesus, however, asks us, "What are you like on the inside?" We may be cynical, lusty, judgmental, pessimistic and still put on a good act for our audience. Traditional or culturally imposed values must not take priority over God's laws.

**Think: Describe yourself in terms of who you are, not what you do.**

**Pray: Lord, search me and reveal to me who I really am. Bring help and healing where I need it.**