

WHEN RITE IS WRONG

by Ray C. Stedman

By this time most of us have seen *Fiddler On The Roof*, and will remember how Tevye, the leading character, opens with the song, *Tradition!* The whole Jewish community was built upon and governed by the long-standing, unbreakable traditions of the past. The unspoken thesis of that play and movie is the way these traditions were being challenged by the unrest and uprootings of the day, and that to have tradition violated causes grief and hardship to many. This is suggestive of the scene we will view today in Mark's Gospel, as Mark brings before us the stark contrast between the ministry of Jesus, who is reaching out in healing love to men and women all over the region, and the hindering work of the scribes and the Pharisees, who attempt, armed with tradition, to halt that ministry of love.

Thomas Dickson, one of the great preachers of the last century, once said, "Tradition was the most constant, the most persistent, the most dogged, the most utterly devilish opposition the Master encountered. It openly attacked him on every hand, and silently repulsed his teaching." That is what we will be seeing in this passage.

We'll begin at Verse 53 with the closing words of Chapter 6, where Mark describes for us something more of the healing ministry of our Lord:

And when they had crossed over [the Sea of Galilee], they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. And when they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him, and ran about the whole neighborhood and began to bring sick people on their pallets to any place where they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well. {Mark 6:53-56 RSV}

This is a beautiful scene of the ministry of Jesus. As you can see, the story of the woman with the issue of blood who was healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment as he was on his way to the house of Jairus has spread now throughout all the regions around Galilee. So wherever Jesus appears, instantly the people begin to bring out the sick and the diseased and the demon possessed, that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And, as Mark tells us, "...as many as touched it were made well." This is a wonderful fulfillment of that beautifully poetic prediction, one of the most majestic passages of Isaiah the prophet, in Isaiah 35:

**Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a hart,
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. {Isa 35:5-6a RSV}**

We can see this in Mark's beautifully descriptive account, as our Lord fulfilled those other words of Isaiah, which Matthew quotes: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases," {Matt 8:17 RSV}. In deliberate contrast to that, Mark immediately moves to the story of a delegation of Pharisees and scribes:

Now when the Pharisees gathered together to him, with some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify themselves [Some versions read "baptize themselves", i.e., wash all over]; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze.) {Marl 7:1-4 RSV}

This introduces us to the subject of the power and effect of tradition. In this opening paragraph we see something of the tremendous force which tradition plays in our lives. Not only was this true of them in that

day; it is true of us today. Some of us are here this morning because it is traditional to be here. Sunday is the day you go to church. All your life you have gone to church on Sunday, so you are here because it is traditional to be here. We have sung some hymns because it is traditional to do so in a morning worship service. And we will do other things because it is traditional! This power from the past touches us all at one time or another. Now, is it good, or is it bad? We will learn in this passage, from the lips of Jesus, the element which makes tradition good, or that which makes it evil.

Notice that this delegation from Jerusalem came deliberately to try to find something with which to oppose Jesus. Their motive was antagonism. Evidently word of this spreading popular movement had reached Jerusalem, and the chief priests and rulers of the Jews were troubled about it. As we saw in our last study, it had already reached the ears of Herod the king, as he, with his political orientation, was made aware of a rapidly spreading movement which was disturbing and threatening. So a delegation of Pharisees and scribes came down from Jerusalem with the direct intent of finding something in the ministry of Jesus with which they could oppose him. They knew that if they could find some challenge Jesus gave to popularly accepted traditions, they could turn the crowd against him. This tells us how strongly these traditions were held.

The one they chose was this: As they watched the disciples and Jesus, they saw that some did not wash their hands in the prescribed way before they ate. Do not read this as though these were dirty disciples, as though they never bothered to wash their hands before they ate. This is not a problem of hygiene at all. I am sure they did wash their hands before they ate. I do not doubt it in the least. But what bothered the Pharisees was that they did not do it in the right way. You see, among the Jews, you could have washed your hands with finest of soaps, and scrubbed like a doctor preparing for surgery; but if you did not do it in a certain way, you were just as unclean, ceremonially, as though you had not washed at all.

In the Revised Standard Version there is a marginal note which says that one word in Verse 3 -- in the phrase "wash their hands" -- "is of uncertain meaning and is not translated." It is the word for "fist." The translators evidently had difficulty understanding how this word fit into the context. But scholars tell us that it was the rigid custom among the Jews to wash in this way: The hands had to be held out, palms up, hands cupped slightly, and water poured over them. Then the fist of one hand was used to scrub the other, and then the other fist would scrub the first hand. This is why the fist is mentioned here. Finally the hands again were held out, with palms down, and water was poured over them a second time to cleanse away the dirty water the defiled hands had been scrubbed with. Only then would a person's hands be ceremonially clean. He might not even have been hygienically clean, but he would have been ceremonially clean. That is, he would have been considered acceptable to God, having given strict attention to the prescribed ritual of cleansing, and thus would have been able to eat in a proper manner.

So strongly was this ingrained in them that, when one rabbi was imprisoned by the Romans for an offense, he used the drinking water brought to him in his solitary dungeon cell to wash his hands in this way. He almost died of thirst! That is how important it was to them to observe these traditions.

Now, the traditions had begun in right ways. That is, they were simply an attempt to understand the Law. The book of Leviticus did require that certain ablutions, certain washings, be performed as a way of teaching the people how to handle sin. That was the intent of the Law. But as these requirements were applied to various situations, certain suggestions were made as to the proper way to do it. And there was nothing wrong with that, particularly. But then the priests began to interpret the suggestions which had been made, and added to them. Then interpretations of the interpretations were added, until gradually there was built up a tremendous mass of tradition which demanded inflexible obedience and scrupulous observance of even the minor details, so that the purpose of the Law was forgotten.

This is what has happened in the Christian church. In the book of Acts you find an amazing liberty of the Spirit among the people of God. The Lord never worked twice in the same way in the book of Acts. That is beautiful to see. But you cannot deduce a ceremony of a ritual for the church from the book of Acts, because God is moving in freshness and variety and spontaneity wherever you turn. But soon some of these ways were settled upon as the right way to do a thing, and others were added, and interpretations were added to them, until through the years, as you well know, there have grown up varying categories of worship forms -- "orders of service" we call them -- each claiming to be the right one. Many of us have been victims of these. We do not

feel we have worshipped unless we have sung the Gloria Patri, or read the Apostles' Creed, or something similar. This is what our Lord is dealing with. Mark shows us first of all the force of such tradition in these people's lives.

In the next section, we read the words of Jesus with regard to tradition, and we learn something of the course of tradition, i.e., how it develops:

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with hands defiled?" And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'" {Mark 7:5-7 RSV}

Those are very insightful words. With our Lord's keen perceptiveness, he plunges right to the heart of the issue. When the Pharisees ask him, "Why do your disciples not observe the traditions?" he points out to them, first of all, the effect that the observance of tradition has upon our lives. It produces hypocrites. "You hypocrites," he says. I am sometimes amazed as I read through the gospels at the bluntness of the language of Jesus! In fact, Matthew's account tells us that the disciples said to him afterward, "Do you realize that you offended those Pharisees?" And he did offend them.

But notice what he is doing here. He is pointing out the result of traditional "worship." And he utilizes the word of the prophet Isaiah to show us what it is like. There are two kinds of hypocrisy, according to Isaiah:

First, there is that which consists of right words but wrong attitudes. Everything outward is right, but inwardly the mind and heart are wrong. That, Jesus says, is hypocrisy -- to look as if you are doing something religious and worshipful and God-related, but inside to have an entirely different attitude.

A few years ago, when the "youth revolt" first began here on the West Coast, many of us were puzzled and offended when young people would say to us, in one way or another, "We don't want to come to church because churches are filled with hypocrites." Some of us could not understand what they meant. We knew there might be some churches that were filled with hypocrites, but not ours! We had honest difficulty with this. We could not see where there was any hypocrisy in a thoroughly Bible-centered, evangelical church such as ours. But what they were saying was this: "You use great words, wonderful words" -- 'God-words', they called them -- "but you don't really mean them. You talk about love, but you don't love. You talk about forgiveness, but you don't forgive. You talk about acceptance, but you don't accept." And they were right.

That is what tradition does to us. It externalizes religion, makes it outward instead of inward. As long as we are fulfilling the prescribed outward form, we think we are acceptable before God. That is the terrible danger of tradition. This particular form which Isaiah mentions here -- right words and wrong attitudes -- is wide-spread among Christians. We all suffer from it, and we ought to recognize it and admit it. It is a struggle we all have, without exception. And it has resulted in what is probably the most deadly danger to the evangelistic message of the church -- the self-righteousness of Christians -- thinking that because we do things in the "right" way, and say the "right" words, and believe the "right" doctrines, we are thus pleasing to God.

I have a Christian friend, a very intelligent, sharp-minded businessman, who has an extremely vivid imagination. One day he sent me an article he had written and asked me to comment. I have held on to a copy of it ever since, because it is such a beautiful statement of the danger of this self-righteousness within the church. It is called,

DON'T TAKE ME TO THE HOSPITAL, PLEASE!

This scene didn't make sense. There he lay in the street, bleeding -- the hit-and-run driver gone. He needed medical help immediately! Yet he kept pleading, "Don't take me to the hospital, please!" Surprised, everyone asked why. Pleadingly he answered, "Because I'm on the *staff* at the hospital. It would be *embarrassing* for them to see me like this. They've *never* seen me bleeding and dirty. They always see me clean and healthy;

now I'm a *mess*." "But the hospital is *for* people like you! Can't we call an ambulance?" "No, please don't. I took a Pedestrian Safety Course, and the instructor would *criticize* me for getting hit." "But who *cares* what the instructor thinks? You need attention." "But there are other reasons, too. The Admissions Clerk would be upset." "Well, why?" "Because she always gets upset if anyone for admittance doesn't have all the details she needs to fill out her records. I didn't see who hit me, and I don't even know the make of the car or the license number. She wouldn't *understand*. She's a real stickler for records. Worse than that, I haven't got my Blue Cross card." "What real difference would that make?" "Well, if they didn't recognize me in this mess, they wouldn't let me in. They won't admit anyone in my shape without a Blue Cross card. They must be sure it isn't going to *cost* the institution. They protect the institution. Just pull me over to the curb. I'll make it some way. It's my fault that I got hit." With this, he tried to crawl to the gutter while everyone left, leaving him alone. Maybe he made it, maybe he didn't. Maybe he's still trying to stop his own bleeding.

Does that strike you as a strange, ridiculous story? It could happen any Sunday in a typical church membership. I *know* it could happen, because last night I asked some active Christians what they would do if on Saturday night they got hit and run over by some unacceptable sin. Without exception they said, "I sure wouldn't want to go to church the next morning, where everybody would see me." Now, be honest -- would you? Or would you reason, "The members would ostracize me. They would look at me like I was strange, and didn't belong there any more. Some of the self-righteous would accuse me of being a hypocrite. The Sunday School teacher would be mad at me for not learning what had been taught. Those sitting next to me would be embarrassed, not knowing how to react, because they didn't know how everybody else felt. They really wouldn't know how to react to a known dirty saint."

In the good-natured spirit of the conversation we decided, if caught -- hit and run over -- by some unacceptable sin, we would be better off to go to the pool hall instead of to the church. At the pool hall we would find sympathy, real understanding. Immediately someone would say, "This isn't the end of the world. It happened to me, and I lived through it." Another would say, "I see you slipped and got caught. Well, don't let it get you down. I know a good lawyer who will help you." Another would add, "You really seem more like one of us than you did before. Now we know you're just like us."

Now, the question that bothered us is, Where should real love and understanding live -- in the pool hall, or in the church of Jesus Christ, who died for sinners? Is the church really going to be the church until every Christian, hit and run over by some sin, starts pleading, "Take me to the church. My brothers and sisters are there. They care for me. I can get well there. I'm a weak member of the Body, but when I hurt, the strong members favor me. And I don't need a paid-up Blue Cross card. And I know they won't talk about me when it's over." Yet, to the last single person at the party, there was not one who said he would feel welcome in his church if the night before he had been caught in some sin which had become known.

That is what our Lord is warning us about here.

Isaiah tells us there is a second form of hypocrisy. It is, "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." This is to have religious actions which are clothing worldly philosophies. This is wide-spread in the church, too. It is the idea that if we take the principles and the precepts by which the world operates -- dog-eat-dog, every man for himself, fulfill yourself first, etc., and clothe them with the words of Scripture, then we are worshipping God. But Jesus says that is hypocrisy, and is a failure to worship.

For some weeks now we have been seeking to change the order of our morning service so as to make it more worshipful. A number of us are thinking and planning and praying about this. Some of you have given your reactions to the changes already made -- some positive, some negative. But the process has driven many to ask the question, "What is worship?" That is a good question. What is worship?

One thing we are learning through this experience is that worship is not at all something you do outwardly; it cannot be. Our Lord put his finger on what, in my judgment, is the greatest definition of worship, when he said to the woman at the well, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth," {John 4:24 RSV}. That says three things:

First, worship must be genuine. It must be something you do inside of you which is deep and real. It cannot be superficial, it cannot be shallow, it cannot be something done with the mind but not with the heart, not without your emotions engaged with what your mind is doing. Anything less is hypocrisy.

Second, worship is therefore individual. In a sense, we cannot have public worship. We can participate in a service together corporately, but worship is only what is going on inside of you. It is "in spirit" -- your spirit. It is your attitude toward the greatness and glory of God, your response to his goodness and his truth, which is worship. It has nothing to do with what your body is doing at the moment, whether it is bowing, or closing its eyes, or saying certain words, or whatever. God is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and in truth. And since it is individual, it is varied. That is, one will be reacting in one way, at one level, another at another level. Thus we can expect it to manifest itself in varied ways, with various expressions. That is why it is wrong to have one set way of expressing worship, and one set time to do it, and never to change.

This is reinforced in the third thing our Lord brought out here: worship must be realistic, i.e., according to the way we understand truth, reality. This means it is growing. Worship must change. It cannot remain static, because our knowledge of reality changes. The more we know, the more different ways we will worship. In a sense, all the church can do on Sunday mornings is to provide an opportunity for you to worship. You must worship; all the leaders of the service can do is to provide an occasion for you to do so. Worship, therefore, is something which goes on in the human heart all the time -- at least, it can and should.

Look at what our Lord says next. He has shown us the danger of tradition -- hypocrisy. Now we have its development, beginning with Verse 8:

"You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men."

And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die'; but you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is Corban', (that is, given to God) -- then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on. And many such things you do." {Mark 7:8-13 RSV}

In those incisive words our Lord is tracing for us what happens when tradition begins to gain sway:

First, it begins with leaving the command of God. Therefore, traditions arise when in some way we try to find a substitute to give God, instead of what he really wants.

In our intern class last week, a businessman who had joined us told of an experience he'd had a week or so earlier. A Christian friend had invited him out to lunch and had said to him, "I don't know what's wrong. Everything is going wrong in my life. I'm about to lose my business; our whole financial base is collapsing! And I don't understand why, because for years I've given money to God, faithfully given him vast amounts of money. I've put that first! And yet, everything is falling apart." Our visitor said to him, "Did you ever stop to think that what God wants is not your money, but you?"

This is where hypocrisy begins -- with leaving the command of God.

It is interesting that the Greek word used here for "tradition" is the word for "surrender," for "giving up," for "substitution." God says, "I want you." But you say, "Would you mind just taking this instead -- my money, my time, my wife, my children, my interests? But don't touch me!" That is where tradition begins -- by leaving the command of God and, the second step, holding fast the tradition men, the substitute. And the substitute is always something "good." We would never think of offering God something bad! But it is not what he wants.

The third step, as our Lord indicates here, is to deny and injure both God and man. He illustrates it with the word about fathers and mothers. The Law says, "Honor your father and your mother," {Exod 20:12a RSV}. That means more than being courteous to them; it means taking care of them, especially as they grow older. The Jews had worked out a keen little way, a "neat" way, Jesus called it -- "You have a neat little way of rejecting the commandment of God." He almost congratulates them for the cleverness with which they did this. They took the money which should have been spent on their father and mother, and said, "This is a gift to

God," dedicated it to God, and then they were free to use it themselves. Their parents could not touch it because it was "dedicated" to God. The modern equivalent is to erect a tax shelter. I do not mean that all tax shelters are wrong. But they can be, and often are, a way of setting aside money which ought to be used for other purposes, and saying, "You can't touch it, I'm sorry. I've got it all tied up in a tax shelter and therefore you have no claim upon me in this regard." Jesus exposes all that. He tells us we will end up hurting people when we do that.

I met with a man just last week who told me how concerned he is about missionary couples he knows who have "dedicated themselves to God" to such a degree that they neglect their families, ship their children off to school, abandon their responsibilities in the home, and excuse it all by saying, "We're dedicating ourselves to the work of God." That is Corban and that is hypocrisy.

Our Lord proceeds even further, and, beginning with Verse 14, gives us the source of tradition:

And he called the people to him again, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." And when he had entered the house, and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. [All the excrement of the mind and heart is what defiles.] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man." {Mark 7:14-23 RSV}

What is he saying about these customs that form? He is saying that there is nothing inherently wrong about them, and nothing inherently good; what you do outwardly is neither bad nor good. What you are thinking and feeling and how you are reacting inside is what determines whether it is bad or good. A practice can be perfectly wholesome and healthy, if the spirit is worshipping. Corporate "worship" apart from that is evil and degenerate, rotten and defiled, in the sight of God. And he puts his finger on the source of this evil within us. Of course, what he is saying here is that all of us are fallen creatures, and we remain fallen creatures as long as we are in this life. This is what the Scriptures tell us again and again. Becoming Christians means that for the moment, at the time, we have a way of overcoming these evils, so we do not need to act out of this kind of thinking. But it does not mean that we will ever in this life be free from the temptations and the urges of these defilements which are listed here.

This is very important for us to know. It is what delivers Christians from being self-righteous snobs -- when we realize that what our Lord has outlined here is true of every single one of us. Do not go through this list and pick out the things you do not do. What Jesus is saying to you is, "If you are guilty of one of them, you are capable of all of them." You need only the proper circumstances to show you how true that is. To quote my friend again, his paper goes on to say,

I remember one of the most saintly women I've ever known, who startled me by saying, "There isn't a sin of which I am not capable. I could be a prostitute, I could be a murderess, I could embezzle." I was convinced she couldn't. Instead, I thought she was displaying a large humility, and therefore I congratulated her on it. But she caught me up short. "You don't really believe I mean that. I do mean it, because I realize that if there is a person who has committed a single sin of which I feel incapable, then I am not able to love that person. The same sin that crops up in their life, in their form, also flows through me and expresses itself in other ways. Until I believe that, I am a self-righteous, proud, arrogant woman."

That is putting it bluntly, but in the terms our Lord himself has stated for us. There is no difference, then, in any of us; we are all alike. Only the redemptive process of God frees us from this at any given moment. These evil things pervade the human heart, and this is what defiles us in the sight of God. Nothing we can do outwardly makes it any better or any worse; the change must come within.

Mark goes on to bring into immediate conjunction with this incident another story. It may look at first as though he has changed the subject. But he has not at all, as we shall see. Beginning in Verse 24:

And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house, and would not have any one know it; yet he could not be hid. But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And he said to her, "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." [Here he used a diminutive, a term which means "pets", not scruffy street dogs.] But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs [pets] under the table eat the children's crumbs. " And he said to her, "For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone. {Mark 7:24-30 RSV}

Two questions are always asked about this incident:

The first is, "Why did Jesus go into Tyre and Sidon?" These were Gentile cities, Canaanite cities. This woman was a Canaanite, Matthew tells us. Yet Jesus left immediately after this teaching on tradition and went into Tyre and Sidon. Why? The only answer is that, as we have seen in this whole section of Mark, he is teaching his disciples certain lessons. This was the first lesson. He was illustrating in terms of race what he had just said in terms of food. All foods are clean, and all peoples are clean, in the sense of being accepted by God. There are no distinctions among foods, as being defiling or undefiling; there are no distinctions among people. So he led them to a Gentile city, in order that their Jewish scruples might be challenged immediately.

The second question is, "Why did he treat this woman rather harshly?" Matthew says that when she first asked him to heal her daughter, he would not even answer her. Many have wondered why. I think the answer is in Matthew's account, where we are told that she first addressed him in this way: "O thou Son of David, come and heal my daughter." "Son of David" is a Jewish term for the Jewish Messiah. She was coming to him on the ground that he was a Jew, and she was a Gentile. That is why he said to her, "The children first must be fed," because it was God's program that this gospel go to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. Now, he never intended that the Gentiles be excluded. But it was to be in the order of the Jews first, then the Gentiles. And when she came on that ground, invoking all the power of Jewish tradition, he said to her, in effect, "You will have to wait until the time comes, until the gospel goes out to the Gentiles. Then I can heal your daughter. By coming on this ground, you have imposed limits and barriers on God. Until they are removed, you cannot come."

But then we have this refreshing change. The woman, concerned about her daughter, in agony for her child, presses through and says, "Yes, Lord; I know that's right. The children ought to eat first, and then the dogs. But, even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table." Then she said what Matthew records: "Lord, help me." The minute she turned from the ground of tradition and the Hebrew approach and, merely as a needy woman concerned about her child, said, "Lord, help me," our Lord's answer was immediate: "Go your way, your daughter is healed." By this incident Mark wants us to learn that tradition is a way of building barriers between us and God. But faith strikes through them all, right to the heart of God. When we come to God in simple faith, without any form or ritual or prescribed words -- merely open our spirit in its need before a providing God -- the answer is always instant and immediate, and healing comes. That is why we worship by our inner response, by what we think while we are singing and praying, rather than by the outward form.

Are you worshipping God this morning?

Is your spirit open to him recognizing an immediate relationship to him which has nothing to do with whether you are sitting or standing or bowing or singing or praying?

Have you come as a child of God, admitting your need, and responding to his provision for that need with a thankful heart, so that your whole person is involved -- spirit, mind, will, emotions, and body, in their right and proper order?

Not emotions first, not physical actions first, but responding as a whole person -- in spirit and in truth?

That is when you are worshipping God, and the Father seeks such to worship him.

Prayer:

Our Father, we confess the many, many times we have performed before you, have done the outward things with the inward heart far removed. We too have been guilty, like the people Isaiah spoke of: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Our words are right, but our actions are wrong And sometimes we have been guilty of clothing the philosophy of the world with words of Scripture. But we thank you, Lord, for your forgiveness. Thank you that you understand our frame. You know us, Lord, and you have already made provision for our forgiveness and cleansing And now we would worship you in spirit and in truth -- the great God of glory, who knows how to teach his people how to worship him. We thank you in Jesus' name, Amen.

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