

Message from God’s Life-Giving Word

May 10, 2020

Escape Clause

*The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; **repent and believe** in the Gospel.*

Mark 1:15

Work Arounds and Whitewashed Tombs

No Escape Clause

Notes on where we have been in Mark’s Gospel account:

Notes on Mark 7:

- What Escape Clauses do you use?

- When have you tried to figure out how close you can get to sin without sinning?

*Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall **love your neighbor as yourself.**’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”* Mark 12:29-31

Next Steps

1. Journal the following: Did you grow up with any religious traditions that, looking back, made God seem small and petty? Respond to the following: Confessing your sin to God makes things right between you and God, regardless of whether you have made things right with the person you sinned against? Why or why not?
2. Read Mark 7:1–15. What stands out to you? Jesus accused religious leaders of nullifying the intent of God’s commands with made-up traditions. Can you think of any modern-day examples of this? Are there any ways you have let go of the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions? Do you identify with any of the following? If so, how?
 - Do you ever try to figure out how close you can get to sin without sinning?
 - Do you believe there is a ritual that makes you right with God while removing the responsibility to make things right with others?
 - Do you feel guiltier about missing church than mistreating someone at work (or home, school, or in your community)?
 - Are you banking on the myth that God has short-term memory loss?
3. Loophole religion is pervasive in our culture, but following Jesus is an invitation to be done with all the games and traditions. We are part of a kingdom of conscience informed by the law of Christ: to love others as God through Christ has loved us. There are no escape clauses in that kind of love—no workarounds. In this kingdom, we wake up every day with the question: What does love require of me?
REMEMBER: *Your time in daily devotion and prayer is not just for your benefit. It’s also for the benefit of others. Share what God is teaching you.*