



“Clean Hands or Clean Hearts”

Matthew 15:1–20

The Authority of the King

Introduction:

What are some of your most proud family traditions?

Matthew 15:1–20 – “Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,’ and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,’ he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, ‘Hear and understand. It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.’ Then the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?’ But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ Jesus said, ‘Are you still lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.’”

The Issue with Jesus (vv.1–2)

“Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’”

There is value in tradition.

1 Corinthians 11:2 – “Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.”

Traditions must never be placed above or on par with the word of God.

Divine authority rests with Scripture alone.

“We believe that the Bible, as originally written, is wholly inspired of God and without error. We believe it is the only truly inspired guide for human belief and conduct.” (2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21)

“Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God... Amen.”—Martin Luther

Devotion to Religion vs. Devotion to God (vv. 3–9)

Religious Corban (vv. 3–6) – “And He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,’ and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,’ he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”

Prophesied Hypocrisy (vv. 7–9) – “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’”

Matthew 7:21–23 – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

Wheat Among the Tares (vv. 12–14)

“Then the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?’ But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.’”

Matthew 13:30 – “Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

The Parable of the Mouth (vv. 53–58)

(vv. 10–11) – “After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, ‘Hear and understand. It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.’”

Proverbs 18:20–21 – “Words satisfy the mind as much as fruit does the stomach; good talk is as gratifying as a good harvest. Words kill, words give life; they’re either poison or fruit—you choose.” (The Message)

(vv. 15–20) – “Peter said to Him, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ Jesus said, ‘Are you still lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.’”

Conclusion:

The heart is so important!

We *believe* with our heart (Romans 10:9–10).

We *love* with our heart (Matthew 22:37).

We *sing* from the heart (Colossians 3:16).

We *obey* from the heart (Romans 6:17; Ephesians 6:6).

We *give* from the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some family traditions that feel unfathomable to break?
2. What are some of your favorite church traditions?
3. How would you describe the difference between being a Christian and a disciple?
 - a. How would you distinguish the difference for a non-believer or new believer?
4. Historically, what ways have you focused more on the external rather than the heart?