

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 15:10-20 | The Parable of the Heart
Sunday August 11, 2024

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 15.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- Notes are in the foyer, so take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we discussed *religious traditions* in our verse-by-verse study of Matthew's Gospel.

We learned how the religious leaders of Jesus' day (scribes and Pharisees) focused more on external form and extra-Biblical rules and regulations than on a genuine saving relationship with God.

From the beginning, God has had a personal relationship with His most prized creation.

-Gen. 3

After the Fall, God still pursued a relationship with His people.

Tragically, we saw how the scribes and Pharisees disregarded the relationship and instead focused on external works, tasks, ceremonies, and rituals.

We saw how a delegation of scribes and Pharisees walked three days from Jerusalem to Galilee to ask Jesus a very important question.

These men walked three days to ask why the 12 Disciples didn't wash their hands.

And we think—hand washing?!

Why are we wasting our time talking about this?

Well, applying God's Word in a modern context is not a waste of time.

It's not a waste of time to examine ourselves, examine our hearts, and review our own behavior.

It's not a waste of time when we substitute "hand washing" with our personal religious traditions.

We all have religious preferences.

If we're not careful, those preferences can turn into traditions—and those traditions can turn into legalism—which pulls us away from God rather than draws us closer.

LAST WEEK KEYPOINT 3:

It's easy to keep traditions and impossible to keep God's commands.

That's the whole point of God's law—showing us that we can't keep it.

That's why we need Jesus, the perfect man, to keep the perfect law on our behalf.

LAST WEEK KEYPOINT 7:

Because traditions are made by men, they can be accomplished by men.

We love our traditions because they are our way of performing for God.

We can't keep the Ten Commandments, so instead, we come up with ten things I can do for God, thinking it's a good swap.

What's even more dangerous is when we act and teach others that our traditions are Scripture—and try to get others to be like us rather than Jesus.

LAST WEEK KEYPOINT 4:

Tradition deals with ritual (habits), while God's Law deals with reality.

↳ TAKE A VISE OUT OF ITS CONTEXT

God wants a relationship.

We are not to perform a series of religious tasks each day, ^{Mind(s)} forget about Him, and move on to what we think is more important.

We fool ourselves into thinking that the busier we are, the better we are.

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10 ESV)

LAST WEEK KEYPOINT 8:

People are willing to die for their traditions.

We learned this by looking at the scribes and Pharisees.

What happened when the Temple was destroyed in AD 70?

Where are the scribes and Pharisees today? Dead along with their traditions.

There's no such thing as Pharisaic Judaism today.

As for us, we, too, are also clinging to our traditions—just like the scribes and Pharisees at times.

So, I gave ten traditions found in the American Evangelical church today.

I couldn't help but notice the blood pressure rise in the room as I went through my list.

Isn't it interesting how our deeply held religious traditions are actually idols that we worship instead of Jesus?

Now, we may never admit that aloud.

However, the truth is revealed when someone points out our deeply held religious tradition.

What happens? Our bodies react with a physiological response—the anger and irritation (aka sin) that we experience when someone says something negative about our tradition.

When that happens, the Lord is telling us to repent of these traditions and to get our eyes back on Him.

*We are to seek **first** the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).*

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we will see part two of this conversation about traditions.

Jesus makes something crystal clear about our traditions.

And that something is that we all have a heart problem.

We all have a specific spiritual type of heart disease—and the side effect is manifested in an undeniable way.

What way is that? How bad is the prognosis? Is it fatal? Is there a cure?

Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 15:10— Summoning the crowd, he told them, “Listen and understand:

Matthew 15:11— *It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth—this defiles a person.”*

Matthew 15:12— *Then the disciples came up and told him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?”*

Matthew 15:13— He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father didn't plant will be uprooted.

Matthew 15:14— *Leave them alone! They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit.”*

Matthew 15:15— *Then Peter said, “Explain this parable to us.”*

Matthew 15:16— *“Do you still lack understanding?” he asked.*

Matthew 15:17— *“Don't you realize that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated?”*

Matthew 15:18— *But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person.*

Matthew 15:19— *For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander.*

Matthew 15:20— *These are the things that defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a person.”*

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 15:1—Then Jesus was approached by Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, who asked,

Matthew 15:2—“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they don't wash their hands when they eat.”,

Matthew 15:3—He answered them, “Why do you break God's commandment because of your tradition?”

Matthew 15:4—For God said: **Honor your father and your mother;** and, **Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.**

Matthew 15:5—But you say, ‘Whoever tells his father or mother, “Whatever benefit you might have received from me is a gift committed to the temple,”

Matthew 15:6—he does not have to honor his father.’ In this way, you have nullified the word of God because of your tradition.

Matthew 15:7—Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said:

Matthew 15:8—**This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.**

Matthew 15:9—*They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands.*

At this point, it's like Jesus dismisses the scribes and Pharisees—this conversation is now over.

Matthew 15:10—*Summoning the crowd, he told them, "Listen and understand:*

Here's the scene: a crowd of people stands at a distance, watching and listening to this conversation between the Pharisees and Jesus.

They may have been standing at a distance out of respect to the scribes and Pharisees.

These men are the religious leaders in Israel—they are well respected by the people.

But Jesus does not respect them—Jesus knows their hearts.

The Lord Jesus has also spoken through the OT prophets and warned these guys repeatedly.

Jesus is done talking.

So after Jesus looks the scribes and Pharisees in the eyes and calls them all hypocrites, Jesus invites the crowd to come closer.

Jesus has something foundational to tell the crowd.

Jesus wants to make sure they hear the main point of that conversation.

So Jesus says, "*Listen and understand.*"

This statement of Jesus is familiar.

When teaching the parables, Jesus repeatedly said, "**Let anyone who has ears listen.**" (Matt.11:15; 13:9, 43).

KEYPOINT 1:

Listen: to hear with the intention of changing.

Teachable

It's not what Jesus says that's hard to understand—~~but rather~~ ^{However, it is} hard to accept, believe, and apply to our lives.

It's the same concept with the Gospel.

The most significant stumbling block to believing that Jesus is the only way to salvation has always been accepting and believing that Gospel truth.

In fact, when the Gospel is presented with boldness, power, and precision, it also becomes the most repulsive to the world.

The apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth, Greece.

1 Corinthians 1:22—For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom,

1 Corinthians 1:23—but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 1:24—Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God,

1 Corinthians 1:25—because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Let's keep in mind that neither the Gospel nor Jesus are anything but unclear.

So Jesus says "Listen: Understand!"

Matthew 15:11— It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth—this defiles a person."

In/out

KEYPOINT 2:

Defile—to make morally impure.

Party

When discussing moral issues, we're talking about what's pure in God's sight.

As Christians, God has told us what's right and wrong—what's pure and impure—in His Book.

So, when Jesus speaks of defilement in verse eleven, He tells us how not to desecrate, disrespect, and contaminate ourselves with the things the world offers.

When we are born again (John 3:3)—God gives us a new spiritual heart.

Ezekiel 36:25— I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols.

Ezekiel 36:26— I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:27— I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.

Ezekiel 36:28— You will live in the land that I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

Ezekiel 36:29— I will save you from all your uncleanness.

God has done all the work to redeem us—our job is to repent, believe, and now walk the narrow road to keep ourselves unstained from the world.

The Old Testament speaks of both morally and ceremonially defiling oneself.

= 3 Moral

~~One~~ ^{first?} of the fastest ways to defile ourselves is through sexual sin.

There are too many cross-references to provide, too many narratives to point to— it's overwhelming.

In other words, the fastest way to stain your new heart and ruin your life is to commit sexual sin.

defile ourselves

Sexual sin is any sexual activity outside the covenant of marriage between one biological man and one biological woman.

This includes pornography.

God's definition of sexual sin is exceptionally narrow.

Narrow for a reason.

When God says "Don't", He means "Don't hurt yourself."

Is it no wonder that there is a movement within worldly evangelical churches today that want to detach/sever themselves from the OT?

Why would they want to do that?

They do that so they can enjoy their sexual sin with a clear conscience.

They think they can live guilt-free if they unhitch themselves from the OT and take the NT passages out of context. - When it comes to sexuality.

A second way to defile ourselves is by consulting mediums, learning about the occult, and reading horoscopes (Lev. 19:31)

A third way to defile ourselves is by worshipping anything and anyone other than Yahweh God. (Lev. 18:30)

There were also hundreds of ways to be *ceremonially* defiled in the Old Testament, but that doesn't apply to us.

However, we are to be very concerned with *moral defilement*—because that's what Jesus is concerned about here.

Matthew 15:11— *It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person,*

Last week, the scribes and Pharisees washed their hands not to defile their food.

These ceremonies, rituals, and other external practices that the scribes and Pharisees demanded from others cannot cleanse a person spiritually.

These were good things prescribed by God and practiced in the OT, ^{but} they were a *picture* of spiritual cleansing.

The physical act didn't change a person spiritually.
Just as baptism is a sign/symbol of a changed life...

These OT rituals were signs that pointed people to the holiness of God—and ultimately to the person of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 15:11— *It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth—this defiles a person."*

This statement from Jesus is revolutionary—it is radical to the people of Israel.

In this statement, Jesus undermines the entire Pharisaic system of religious practice.

This statement threatened Israel's basic idea of what religion is!

Jesus' point is crystal clear: the ultimate source of defilement is revealed by what we say—not by our diet.

Scripture has much to say —about what we say.

James 3:5—the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest.

We get this—we see the signs with Smokey the Bear as we drive through the national forests.

We know the slogans,

- “Only you can prevent wildfires.”
- “Don’t keep it lit, extinguish it.”
- “Drown your campfires.”

Why? *Because a small fire sets ablaze a large forest.*

James 3:6—And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness (wickedness), is placed among our members. It stains (corrupts) the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

James 3:7—Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind,

A killer whale can perform tricks at Seaworld...

James 3:8—but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

How are our tongues deadly and evil?

James 3:9—With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness.

Our tongues are deadly and evil because...

James 3:10— Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way.

How many of us can relate?

Driving down the road, singing our favorite worship songs—and somebody cuts us off!

And what happens next is not appropriate for this pulpit!

The irony is that we go back to singing worship music without giving our words and actions a second thought!

Matthew 15:12— Then the disciples came up and told him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?"

What's going on here?

It appears that a few of the Disciples got a tongue-lashing from the Pharisees.

Why do they care about offending the Pharisees?

God's person . . .

They had always believed that the scribes and Pharisees were to be respected, so they were concerned about Jesus' rebuke.

Make no doubt that the wrath of the religious leaders in the first century was a real thing.

Matthew 15:12— "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?"

Maybe the Disciples felt like many of you did when I went through the most common church traditions last Sunday.

- last Sunday

Offense

- Sinners Prayer
- King James Only Bible.
- Tongues.

Took Offense / Skandalizō —(scandal) to be filled with disgust for someone. It's this idea of tripping, stumbling, and falling into disbelief.

When John the Baptizer was rotting away in prison, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus this question...

Matthew 11:3— "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

In other words, John wants to know—if he's the greatest prophet ever—what's he doing in prison?

Matthew 11:4— Jesus replied to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:

And now Jesus provides the proof that He is indeed the Messiah / Savior / God in flesh and bone.

Matthew 11:5— The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news,

Matthew 11:6— and blessed (happy/fortunate) is the one who isn't offended by me."

The Disciple's concern about the Pharisee's offense is amusing.

Of course, the Pharisees were offended by Jesus!

They were always offended by Jesus.

Self-righteous people are always offended when someone speaks directly to their sin.

We hear this all the time—

- *How can you Christians say that Jesus is the only way to God?*
- *How dare you say that I'm not a good person!*
- *I have the right to love anyone I choose to love! (So do Christians. And we choose to love Jesus.)*

KEYPOINT 3:

Worldly people are offended by the truth.

The fact that people are offended is proof of their sin.

That's why people are trying to outlaw the truth today.

Matthew 15:13— He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father didn't plant will be uprooted."

To us, that's a bizarre way of answering this question about the Pharisees' offense.

However, Jesus' answer contains immense Biblical symbolism.

Examples: When the nation of Israel worshiped other gods...

Deuteronomy 29:28—*The Lord uprooted them from their land in his anger, rage, and intense wrath, and threw them into another land where they are today.*

Psalm 1, also known as the Gateway Psalm, states that we must choose God's way or our way each day.

+ **Psalm 1:1**—How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers!

+ **Psalm 1:2**—Instead, his delight is in the Lord's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.

+ **Psalm 1:3**— He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

In John's Gospel, Jesus says,

+ **John 15:2**— Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.

The apostle Paul says,

+ **1 Corinthians 3:9**—For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field,
You've been planted by God!
So, with that Biblical background, Jesus says...

+ **Matthew 15:13**— He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father didn't plant will be uprooted."

In other words, Jesus tells His disciples, *Yes, I know they were offended. I meant to be offensive.*

That's the whole point!

What happens when you pull weeds out by their roots?—they die.

Being uprooted represents several things in Scripture.

The first is total physical destruction.

The second comes from a spiritual perspective— eternal judgment in hell.

So, to prevent being *uprooted*...

KEYPOINT 4:

Giving offense is sometimes necessary for the sake of truth.

The truth will set people free—if they allow it. (John 8:32)

Sometimes its the offense that may save someone's soul.

Sometimes, it's the offense for a false teacher to repent.

Jude 12—*They are like shameless shepherds who care only for themselves. They are like clouds blowing over the land without giving any rain. They are like trees in autumn that are doubly dead, for they bear no fruit and have been pulled up by the roots.*

Jude is saying the same thing Jesus is—all these people who are self-proclaimed pastors—

They start ministries and churches by themselves! With no calling and no accountability.

BTW, people don't plant churches—churches start churches.

But in His grace, look what Jesus says to do for now...

Matthew 15:14— *Leave them alone!*

In other words,

- Keep your distance.
- Have nothing to do with them.
- Ignore them.
- Pay no attention to them.
- Run away from them!

Why? Because they are false teachers.

Notice that Jesus did not debate the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus, generally, didn't have long, drawn-out conversations with these guys.

When Jesus responded to their questions or accusations, it was always by correcting them through Scripture.

That's why the OT is so important.

We can't understand God's grace without first understanding God's law.

Leave them alone! —This is a great command for us to hear today.

There are so many Christians critiquing and condemning other Christians—especially online.

I wonder what would happen if these critiquing Christians would allow the heretics to be heretics and instead do something much more productive—like fulfilling the Great Commission.

Matthew 15:14— *They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit."*

Jesus provides his famous characterization of the Pharisees—blind guides.

Sadly, physical blindness was common in first-century Israel.

Everyone knew that blind people needed help— guides.

But how foolish is it for one blind man to lead and guide another blind man?

Yet that is precisely what the Pharisees did spiritually with their false teachings and traditions.

They were spiritually blind, yet they considered themselves spiritual leaders.

Matthew 15:14— *And if the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit.*

There were lots of physical pits in Israel.

People dug holes in the fields and filled them with water for their animals.

A blind man walking through a field would eventually fall into a pit.

The crowd immediately recognized Jesus' analogy.

Secondly, the spiritual meaning of this pit is eternal judgment in hell. (2 Pe. 2:4, Rev. 9:1-2).

Matthew 15:15— *Then Peter said, "Explain this parable to us."*

It's not so much that the disciples didn't understand what Jesus meant— it was, however, hard to grasp and accept.

They, too, found Jesus' point so radical that they wanted to make sure they were on the same page.

Matthew 15:16— *"Do you still lack understanding?" he asked.*

Matthew 15:17— “Don't you realize that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated?”

That's pretty self explanatory.

Matthew 15:18— But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person.

KEYPOINT 5:
Our words reveal the wickedness in our hearts.

Our words and the tone in which we speak them—reveal the condition of our character.

Matthew 15:19— For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander.

Notice how Jesus doesn't speak of “the good things that come up out of human hearts.”

The world does that—focuses on compassion, kindness, gentleness, and love. Instead, Jesus refers to the bad things. *Passion?*

Why? Because Jesus wants us to look at ourselves in the mirror very closely.

He wants us to get a spiritual physical. Why?

KEYPOINT 6:
We all suffer from heart disease.
We all have a beating but diseased heart.

Our human heart pumps evil through our arteries.

How do we know? Look at this list:

+ **Matthew 15:19**— For from the heart come evil thoughts, ~~murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander.~~

Notice the first sin—evil thoughts.

We would think it's the other way around—evil thoughts corrupt the heart.

But it's not—our hearts ^{source of} contribute to our evil thoughts.

+ **Jeremiah 17:9**—The heart is more deceitful than all else — incurable
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?

The apostle Paul expands on this in Romans 1-3!

It is the depravity of our hearts that corrupts our minds, and our minds desire evil thoughts.

Evil thoughts lead to evil actions.

Where does Jesus get this list?

From the OT! Jesus focuses on the second table of the Ten Commandments—six through nine.

+ **Matthew 15:19**— For from the heart come evil thoughts, **murders,** ~~adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander.~~

Exodus 20:13, "**Do not murder.**"

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount...

Matthew 5:21 NLT—You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.'
 we will be judged according to the crime we've committed.

Matthew 5:22 NLT—But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

Who can keep those laws? Exactly.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the true intent of God's Law.

He didn't water it down.

It's not about physical murder—it's about our heart's attitude towards the person we're angry with.

Next, notice how sexual sin is mentioned twice in this list.

Matthew 15:19—For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, any sexual activity outside the covenant
 ↳ Vow, Covenant between you & God & you & your spouse.

Sexual sin ran rampant in the Roman empire as it does today in Cottonwood.

The fastest way to ruin your life is to celebrate what the world does.

Matthew 15:19—For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, **false testimonies, slander.**

↳ under oath

↳ blasphemy
 ↳ disrespect God

These last two sins deal with our tongues.

How do you know what's in your heart? Easy—look at what comes out of your mouth.

our heart & mouth are two sides of the same coin

Matthew 12:36—I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak.

our speech has consequences

Matthew 12:37— *For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*"

Our words speak volumes. Our words are the window to our hearts.

KEYPOINT 7:

Our hearts are only as clean as our words.

Matthew 15:20— *These are the things that defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a person."*

Summary verse—in other words, give me a break.

unwashed hands

PREACH:

Today's passage is called "The Parable of the Heart."



PREACH:

Today's passage is called "*The Parable of the Heart.*"

So, how's your heart this morning?

Jesus says that if you want to know the condition of your heart—examine the words that come out of your mouth.

Let's take a pop quiz on our heart's condition today.

Let's do a *spiritual physical* on our hearts and mouths.

- Are the words—and the tone of your words—*kind, gentle*?
- Are your words encouraging?
- Are your words positive or negative? Why?
- How much profanity comes out of your mouth? How much profanity are you listening to?
- Have you asked forgiveness from someone— because of your words?
- How many broken relationships do you have because of your words?
- What's preventing you from asking for forgiveness today?

PRAYER

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and protect you; may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace." ' (Num. 6:25)

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