

Jesus: No Spin

Matthew Chapter Fifteen: Inside-Out Religion

personal / group study for use with the message of January 17th and 18th, 2009

"It's not what you swallow that pollutes your life" (Matthew 15:11).

Jesus is more concerned with the heart issues behind all the rules we live by. Sometime Christians are known more for what they are against, or the rules their church has, then the love of God. The Pharisees in this chapter of Matthew took laws about hand washing to the extreme and put great spiritual emphasis on them. Jesus did not condemn this hand washing tradition, but His concern was putting men's traditions about God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the impossible standard of going beyond the Law. So it isn't that He is against the Law, but He is concerned about our hearts.

Introduction.

"God wants us to give Him our hearts, and not just our lip service. We believe in the heart (Romans 10:9-10), love from the heart (Matthew 22:37), sing from the heart (Colossians 3:16), obey from the heart (Romans 6:17; Ephesians 6:6), and give from the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7). No wonder David prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God' (Psalms 51:10)!" –Warren Wiersbe

Read.

Matthew 15

1Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

3Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? 4For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' 5But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' 6he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 " 'These people honor me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me.

9They worship me in vain;

their teachings are but rules taught by men.' "

10Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. 11What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.' "

12Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

13He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. 14Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

15Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."

16 "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. 17 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? **18But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart**, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.' "

21Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."

23Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

24He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

25The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

26He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

27 "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

28Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

29Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. 30Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. 31The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

32Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."

33His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"

34 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.
"Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."

35He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. 36Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. 37They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 38The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children. 39After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan. **All scripture taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.*

Questions.

ThinkAboutIt...

1. Why do you follow rules? Why don't you?
2. Why did Jesus ask the disciples to feed the crowd?

ReflectOnIt...

3. What makes a person spiritually clean? See Romans 3:22-24; Romans 4:3, 23-25; Romans 8:1, 2.
4. Compare Matthew 15:2 and 15:3. What do the Pharisees say is being broken? What does Jesus say is being broken? Which is more important?
5. How can you be sure that you aren't following "blind guides"? (Matthew 23:26) See Romans 12:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 12:1-3.
6. Why did the women in verse 22 seek Jesus out?
7. How does Jesus speak to her? What do you learn about her faith?

RespondToIt...

8. How are people hindered from knowing God by placing traditions or rules in their way?
9. How does humility and dependence on God effect our relationship with Him? How does God make our heart pure?

"Too much of what we call Christian is not a manifestation of the supernatural life of God in our souls. Too much of what we call Christian is really just human...The Church of God is present where people gather together in the power of the resurrected life of Jesus Christ." Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*