

## ***The Heart of Worship***

*Matthew 15:1-20* - NCBC, August 30, 2020

Main Point: **Pure worship flows from my heart, not my appearance (10-11)**

- **Follow God's words rather than human traditions (1-9)**
  - A religion of man-made rules destroys God's word (1-6)
  - A religion of man-made rules destroys true worship (7-9)
- **Focus on God's work rather than human opinions (12-20)**
  - God condemns the best of human religion (12-14)
  - God looks at the ruling beliefs and desires of the heart (15-20)

Application: **Purify your worship by asking God to purify your heart.**

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### **Opening Announcements:**

- **Tonight at 6pm** everyone is invited to our Quarterly Congregational Meeting in the Family Center. Join in-person or online as you desire!
- **Remember to visit [myncbc.org](http://myncbc.org)** and follow our NCBC Facebook page to stay informed on all ministry/event updates during this season of careful regathering.
- **It's not too late to still sign up for one of our Life Groups** this month! Email Pastor Shaun to learn more [slewis@myncbc.org](mailto:slewis@myncbc.org).

<<Jesus Paid It All>>

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**No matter what sins you have committed in your past, you can draw near to God this morning simply through faith in Jesus.** Are you thankful for Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf?

Jesus paid for our sins by dying in our place on a cross. His blood washed our sins away, so that when we believe on Jesus and His resurrection, His life becomes our life, and we are welcomed and accepted to live eternally with God forever!

In light of Jesus' cross, humble awe and thanksgiving should motivate our worship of Jesus this morning as we open our Bibles to **Matthew chapter 15** to consider *The Heart of Worship*.

If you're joining us online, please notice the links alongside this livestream offer fill-in-the-blank sermon notes, the preaching manuscript, and children's coloring pages to assist your worship. At any time you may pause this video, print those files, and then rejoin our worship with those notes in front of you.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW				
1-3 Presentation of the King				
<b>4-7</b> <b>Proclamation of the King</b> <i>Sermon on the Mount (5-7)</i>	<b>8-10</b> <b>Power of the King</b> <i>Sending out the 12 Apostles (10)</i>	<b>11-13</b> <b>Rejection of the King</b> <i>Kingdom Parables (13)</i>		
Kingdom offered to Israel			Kingdom offered to all Nations	
26-28 Passion & Proof of the King				

As we enter **chapter 15** today, it's helpful to remember where this chapter fits in **Matthew's** overall argument.

Remember that the body of **Matthew's** gospel is arranged topically into 5 major sections. And **chapter 12**, right in the middle, is the hinge-point of history.

Everything leading up to **chapter 12** is Jesus offering His kingdom to Israel. But after the Jews reject Jesus and commit the unpardonable sin in **chapter 12**, Jesus turns to the Gentiles – to all the people of the world – and invites them into His kingdom.

We are currently in the fourth section of **Matthew** which highlights the Priorities of the King. Everything that Jesus does and teaches is contrary and topsy-turvy to what the Jewish people would have expected from their Messiah!

In **chapter 14**, Jesus avoided political confrontation with Herod, manifested His glory through the disciples inability, and was worshipped as God's Son after walking on the water to save His disciples from certain death.

So after proving He was indeed the Bread of Life who is sufficient for all our needs and all our fears, **chapter 15** has three major sections that all deal with food!

So if you're hungry today, listen up!

The first 20 verses of **chapter 15** deal with Jesus' handling of dietary traditions. The last 20 verses show the faith of a Canaanite woman who compares Jesus' mercy to bread crumbs, and Jesus feeds a huge Gentile crowd with seven loaves and fish.

Therefore **chapter 15** uses Jesus' interaction with food to show us how Jesus is expanding His kingdom to Gentiles. **Chapter 15** shows Jesus' surprising priority on including people like you and me in His heavenly kingdom.



So please stand for the public reading of God's Word as I read from **Matthew 15 verse 1**, in the ESV:

*Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." 3 He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' 5 But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," 6 he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. 7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 8 "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 9 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*

*10 And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: 11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."*

*12 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" 13 He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. 14 Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." 15 But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." 16 And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."*

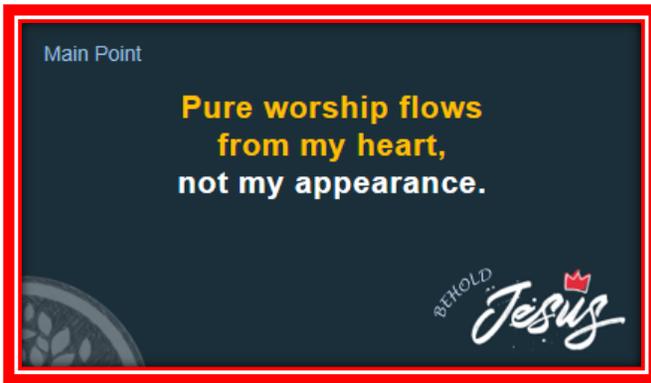
This is God's Word.  
**Let's Pray Together.**

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I have two personal stories that help set up our sermon today. The first one is somewhat humorous, the second is really sad ... but both are very embarrassing for me.

First, those who know me well realize that I've never been the most suave or hip person in the room! But in recent weeks, I've been talking more about my wardrobe, and how I really need help with my clothes and grooming so I don't look like such a "stoofel".

But then in God's perfect timing, He brings me to this Scripture to study, where Jesus' main point is that



Pure worship flows from my heart, not my appearance.

Isn't that just like our good Heavenly Father? When my attention turns towards uniforms and my appearance ... God's Spirit opens up **Matthew 15** and says, Hey stoofel... don't get the emphá-sis on the wrong sý – llable! Remember pure worship flows from your heart – not your appearance!! Nothing wrong with looking nice, but your outerwear will never be able to dress up your insecurities and fear of man!

Ah... God's word is so timely and sufficient for all of us! And in these days of face coverings and hand washings, it is God's grace that reminds us He cares much more about defiled hearts than He ever does about hygiene.

Now for the sad story. And this one is harder for me to share with you. Because looking back, I really grieve how my wrong beliefs spiritually harmed another's soul.

Around 20 years ago, I was serving as one of the leaders of our young adults' ministry for the church I was part of. And there was a new Christian – a young gal – who was really struggling to embrace all the traditions of our local church at the time – specifically some of the traditions

related to women wearing dresses and wearing their hair in a bun.

And I remember one meeting where I and our church elder tried to help this sister understand why it was so important for her to follow our church's traditions.

It makes me so sad now... we were so blinded by our pride and our fear we couldn't see how we were destroying Scripture.

And when the meeting was over, I'll never forget what the elder told her as she asked again why she had to follow these outward traditions in order to be a Christian.

The elder encouraged her,

“Just get your outside right, then your inside will follow.”

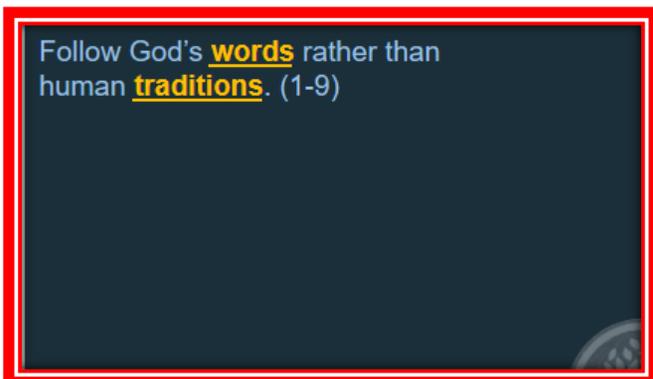
What a twisted lie from Satan himself! I'm ashamed I used to believe this. Because in **Matthew 15**, Jesus teaches the exact opposite:

*Pure worship – pure and undefiled religion – flows from my heart, not my appearance.*

Are you ever tempted to value outward appearances more than the internal beliefs and desires of your heart?

By God's grace, I'm no longer that same Pharisee who cares about dresses and hair styles. But I confess I'm still a recovering legalist who is quite practiced at judging others who don't worship like I worship. I'm still far too skilled at spiritualizing my preferences in the courtroom of my mind.

So let's proceed with humble and teachable hearts as we ask God's Spirit to purify our worship by purifying our hearts today.



**Verses 1-9** first teach us to **Follow God's words rather than human traditions**. If you desire to worship King Jesus – then make sure you are submitting to God's commands rather than culture's preferences.

Because religious hypocrites always define sin as something external or visible to the community. Jesus' enemies put their religious assurance in conformity to man-made rules. But Jesus teaches that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:20

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 30:17-21 required the priests to wash their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle. Leviticus 15:11 implies that washing one's hands after becoming ritually unclean kept that uncleanness from being transmitted to another. But nothing in the OT commands the washing of hands before eating.

<sup>3</sup> A whole tractate (treatise) of the Mishnah is devoted to this practice (called Yadaim, "Hands"). A person would first pour water over his hands with his fingers pointing up and with the water reaching the wrist. Then he

In **verse 1**, we meet an official delegation of Pharisees and scribes who have traveled from Jerusalem – the headquarters of Judaism – to specifically confront and expose Jesus as an irreligious heretic.

It wasn't every day that religious heavy-weights like these showed up in Galilee...but their inferior counterparts from the Galilean synagogues had called for help. Jesus' ministry was affecting people's trust in their rabbinic authority. So these highly respected leaders come to ask Jesus the pointed question in **verse 2**,

*Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?*

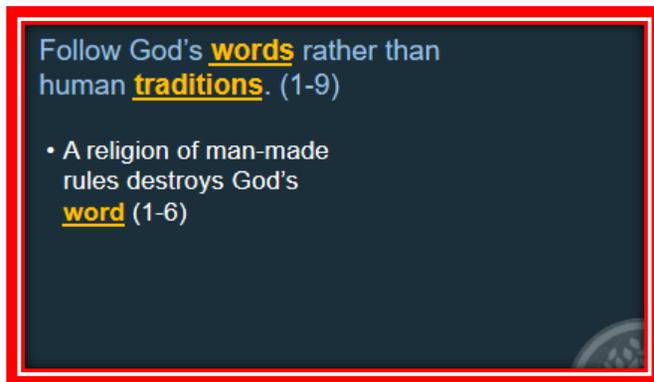
Jesus was not teaching His followers to follow the Jewish traditions related to ceremonial cleanness during eating!

Now don't get confused. Their concern was actually not about physical hygiene or germs. Rather, they believed that breaking the ceremonial hand-washing rules made a person spiritually "unclean" or defiled before God. If you write in your Bible, underline that phrase, "tradition of the elders." This committee from Jerusalem knew God's law did not require this kind of washing.<sup>2</sup> But Jewish tradition now had a whole chapter written on ceremonial hand-washing before eating,<sup>3</sup> and it was a serious offense to disobey the traditions of Jewish elders!

would point his fingers down and pour water again, this time allowing the water to drip off his fingers. Each hand then had to be rubbed with the other, but only after the other hand was clean. For to neglect any part of this washing was considered a serious sin – possibly a deadly one. For if a person was not ceremonially cleansed before eating, he/she could invite defilement into their body through the food which was handled with defiled hands, and thereby deem themselves unacceptable and unworthy of God's presence.

After all, in the Pharisee's minds you couldn't understand God's law without the oral tradition passed down from Moses through each successive generation. Over time, these oral traditions<sup>4</sup> gained more authority and reverence than the very law of God itself since the Jews believed the elders' traditions were the only reliable interpretation of God's Word!

But listen carefully friends:



A religion of man-made rules destroys God's word.

Jesus responds in **verse 3** by changing the subject in a rhetorical counterattack:

*Why do you break the commandments of God for the sake of your tradition?*

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<sup>4</sup> The oral law, or “tradition of the elders,” was eventually written down and became the Talmud (comprised of the earlier Mishnah and later Gemara). These teachings consisted of commentary on God's law, proper interpretations of God's law, and detailed rules of behavior.

<sup>5</sup> “Josephus notes that the law on honoring parents ranked second only to honoring God, and that if a son did not respond to the benefits that he received from his parents, he should be stoned (Ag. Ap. 2.27)! This

Whenever you love your religious culture more than God, you will create a religion of self-righteousness and you will empty God's word of its power!

To prove His point, Jesus picks one of the Jew's favorite 10 commandments<sup>5</sup> – the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment to honor father and mother. He reminds these Jewish leaders of what God's law actually says in **verse 4**,<sup>6</sup> but then contrasts this with their Jewish tradition of “Corban” in **verse 5**.

You see Jewish tradition<sup>7</sup> taught that a person could call his possessions *Corban*,<sup>8</sup> meaning “a gift devoted to God.” And since God's law forbade anyone from breaking a vow,<sup>9</sup> once a person's resources were promised to God, they couldn't be shared with their needy parents.

However, devoting your resources to God with a *Corban* vow still allowed you to keep all your resources until death. And in fact, if you needed any of your possessions that had been dedicated to God, you could simply say *Corban* over your goods again to release yourself from his vow.

Obviously then *Corban* was never about worship, it was always about justifying and excusing their failure to truly honor their parents!

certainly would support Jesus' understanding of the commandment as a very fundamental one.” D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; and Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 21:17

<sup>7</sup> C.f. Tractate Nedarim, esp. 1:2-4; 9:7, in the Mishnah

<sup>8</sup> This word is specifically used in the parallel account of Mark 7:11

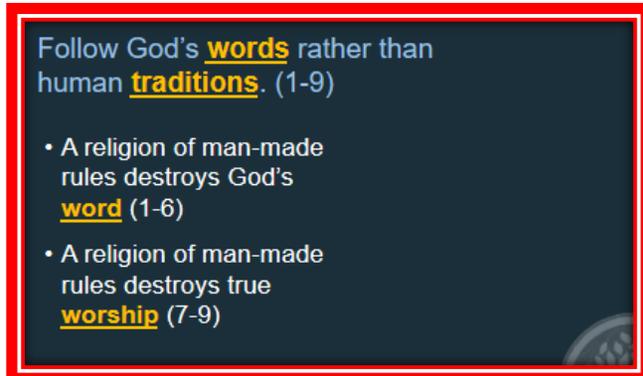
<sup>9</sup> C.f. Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21-23

As Jesus says clearly at the end of **verse 6**,  
*For the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God!*

Church please listen carefully. Human tradition always undermines the authority of God's Word.

You see the church of my childhood taught me that man-made traditions were helpful guardrails to protect me from disobeying God's word. But God's gospel doesn't need protection! Whenever we introduce man-made rules into a person's spirituality, we destroy the very gospel we claim to be protecting!

So now in **verses 7-9** Jesus goes on to condemn these leaders' wrong understanding of true religion. He wants us to understand clearly today that,



**A religion of man-made rules destroys true worship.**

In **verse 7**, Jesus calls these leaders hypocrites! Pretenders. You pretend to worship God, but you are actually worshipping yourself!

Then He quotes from **Isaiah 29:13**, saying Isaiah's words specifically apply to these Jewish leaders,

*This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*

Their worship was useless because it was only superficial lip-service. Their hearts did not love God. They loved their own culture. Their own traditions. Their own language and practices which fueled their ability to judge others and feed their own self-righteousness.

In truth, these most highly regarded leaders of spirituality were far from God!

Church – whenever we spiritualize our preferences and teach our own culture as if it is God's way – our worship has no value!

Elders and Global partners – we must never spiritualize our preferences in cross-cultural discipleship! The early church wrestled with this particularly with dietary laws<sup>10</sup> and circumcision.<sup>11</sup> And today our particular religious tribe has our own customs and preferences. But we must always remember the heart of worship first *loves* God, and then second *loves* people from all cultures and preferences in the family of God. The kingdom of God only has one King – and His words are fully sufficient to knowing and worshipping Him together!

Now in **verses 10-11** Jesus turns His attention from the Pharisees to the crowd, because He wants to make sure all the people get the main point of his argument:

<sup>10</sup> Acts 10:15; c.f. Galatians 2:11-14

<sup>11</sup> Galatians 5:6



Pure worship flows from my heart, not my appearance. Pay careful attention to this, Jesus says in **verse 10**:

*It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.*

This is His main point. The Pharisees were wrong to think that any physical ritual had the power to keep them spiritually clean! No washing, no baptism, no religious ritual has the ability to change your status with God!<sup>12</sup>

Jesus teaches clearly – anything that you eat – whatever goes into the mouth – is physical. And there's no physical action or activity on earth that has the power to defile – or pollute – your relationship with God.<sup>13</sup>

True religion is about faith in Christ, not human forms!  
True religion is about a transformed life living in loving relationship with God Himself!

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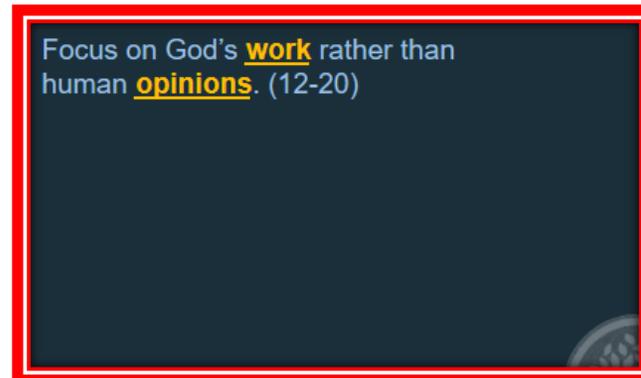
<sup>12</sup> You see, ever since God gave the law to Moses, the Jews had become more concerned with external ritual than internal repentance. They focused on physical circumcision as being the evidence that someone was in God's family – and forgot that physical circumcision was meant to be an outward symbol of a circumcised heart! (Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 16; Jeremiah 4:4; Page **8a** of 14

It is what comes *out* of the mouth...what comes *out* of a person – from his inside – that's the truest expression of his worship.

Pure worship is about a purified heart, not kosher hands.

So after hearing Jesus' teaching, the disciples come privately to him in **verse 12** with questions. This teaching was so radically different from how they were brought up in Jewish tradition.

So in this private counseling session with His disciples, Jesus ensures they know that true worship,



Focuses more on God's work than human opinions.

After all, people-pleasing is a fertile seedbed for hypocrisy and false religion. The fear of man – the ruling

c.f. Romans 4:1-12). They focused on external law-keeping, instead of sincere love for God, and defiled themselves.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus was often attacked by the Pharisees for associating himself with sinners in ways that Jewish tradition would have never allowed! Matthew 9:9-13; 11:16-19; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32; 7:31-50; 15:1-2; 19:1-10

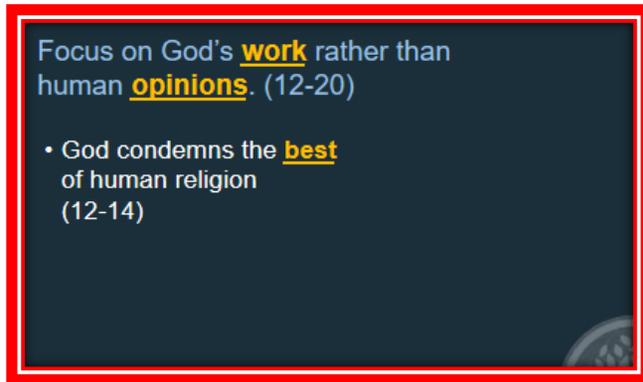
desire to improve my reputation with others – is a deep root underneath worthless worship.

So here comes the disciples in **verse 12**,

Jesus – do you know that the Pharisees were offended by your teaching?

Lord... you really should stop offending the influencers who could help our movement! Don't you understand that the Pharisees are the holy ones? Why did you hurt their feelings?

But Jesus doubles down with shocking judgment in **verses 13-14** as He,



condemns the best of human religion.

We must remember these Pharisees were the most esteemed from Jerusalem. We might picture them like the David Jeremiah, Tony Evans, and Ravi Zacharias of today!

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<sup>14</sup> C.f. Isaiah 60:21

<sup>15</sup> C.f. Psalm 92:12-13; Isaiah 61:3; Jeremiah 17:7-8; John 15:8; 1

The disciples would have considered these Pharisees the most God-glorifying examples of religion. But listen to Jesus' words in **verse 13**,

*Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit.*

Jesus could not have given a stronger rebuke than to say the Pharisees were not part of the true vine that God had planted!<sup>14</sup> They were rootless plants and blind guides. Pretenders. Hypocrites.

Only those whom God plants<sup>15</sup> – or gives a clean heart, are able to please God in their worship!

Religious hypocrites will always be offended by God. Because religious hypocrites are destined for judgment. And religious hypocrites only lead others to judgment as well.<sup>16</sup>

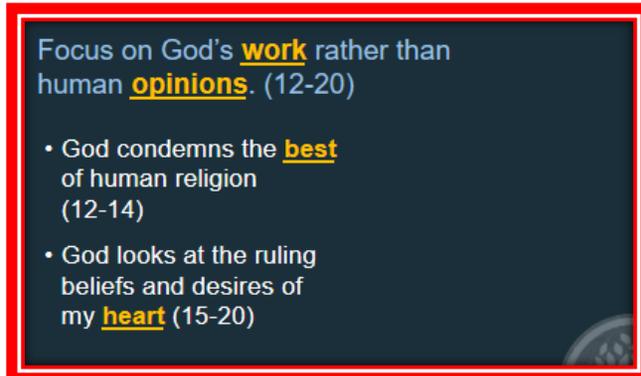
So have nothing to do with them. Stay away from anyone who values human tradition more than God's Word. Although they perceive themselves to be enlightened leaders of blind multitudes, they are outside God's kingdom. The pit of an eternal hell awaits all who trust in their own man-made rules for their standing with God.

Now the disciples were really struggling with this. So in **verse 15**, Peter asks Jesus to explain the main point again. What does the parable in **verse 11** really mean?

Corinthians 3:9;

<sup>16</sup> C.f. Matthew 23, especially verse 15.

Jesus is grieved by how much His disciples were shaped by their culture. And so again He repeats His point. Man looks at outward appearances,<sup>17</sup> but



God looks at the ruling beliefs and desires of the heart.

God doesn't care about who is applauding you. God doesn't care about your external formalities. Nothing physical has the power to change your spiritual life with God.

**Verse 17** basically repeats the first part of **verse 11**.

Whatever enters a person's mouth eventually goes into the stomach and then departs as human waste. There's only a temporary relationship between your food and your life.

However, in contrast **verse 18**, where what comes out of a person originated from their heart – from their own character and life. And whatever comes out of a

person's character is the true reflection of his real spirituality.

**Verse 19** illustrates this by teaching that evil, or the defilement of the soul, always has its origin in the heart of a person.

*For out of the heart come evil thoughts.* Whether these evil thoughts are expressing sins like murder, or adultery, or fornication, or theft, or lying, or slander ... this whole range of sins and others like them all originate in a person's inner beliefs and desires.<sup>18</sup>

**Verse 20** says clearly – these evil thoughts are what defile, or pollute a person's relationship with God.

Therefore, contrary to what false religion teaches, the essence of sin is inner thoughts, not the outward acts. Worldliness is an internal condition of your soul, not some external action of your life. I sin because I want to sin – whether or not I ever carry it out in action. Just like we learned from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount,<sup>19</sup> I sin because I'm sinful on the inside.

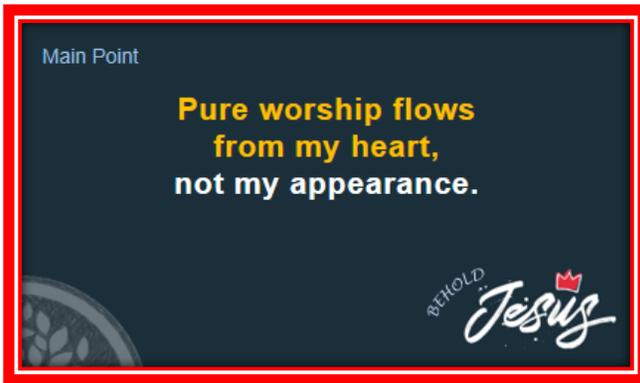
No amount of physical washing or religious tradition can ever make me clean enough for God.

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Samuel 16:7

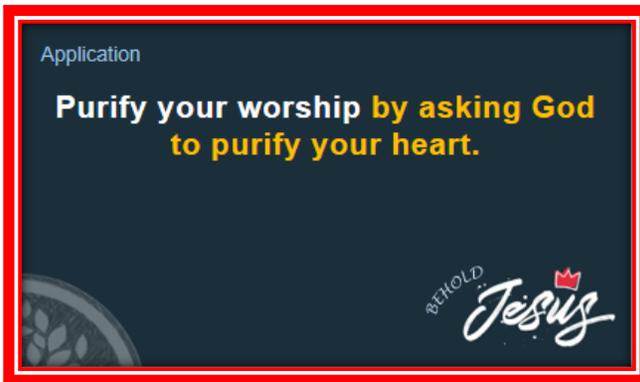
<sup>18</sup> James 4:1-10ff

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 5-7



Pure worship flows from my heart, not my appearance.

Therefore, we must submit to the soul-penetrating words of God, rather than the superficial traditions of men, and humbly recognize we need God to purify our heart before our worship can ever be pleasing to Him!



In other words, we must **Purify our worship by asking God to purify our hearts.**

We are far more concerned about looking good, than actually being righteous before God. We are more eager to judge other people's religion, than truly love God and rest in His love for us.

So let me quickly suggest 3 practical ways for us to purify our worship.

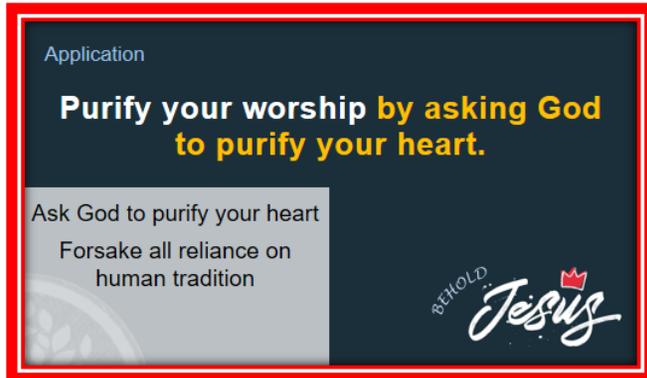


First, and most importantly, **you must ask God to purify your heart.** No amount of behavior modification, reeducation, or human tradition can make pure what is already spiritually putrid.

In the words of **John 3**, you must be born again. You must receive a new heart. And such a heart is only granted to those who confess their sinfulness, and believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died and rose again in your place to bring you to God!

How can you know if God has given you a new heart? First, you will truly love God even when no one else is watching. You will no longer be offended at His truth. Instead of judging those who follow Him, you will grow in love for God's family, and grow in obedience to His Word. And although you aren't yet perfect, your new heart will show itself over and over in repentance from sin and joyful delight of your eternal reward.

Dear friend – has God mercifully planted you by His grace, and united your life to Jesus by the power of His Spirit?



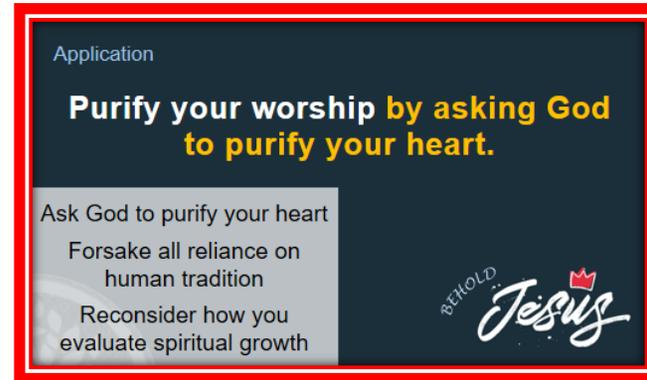
Second, we must purify our worship by **forsaking all reliance on human tradition.**

Do you spiritualize your preferences, or teach human tradition as the commandment of God?

Yes living with Christ will require you to form personal convictions about politics, tithing, drinking, smoking, dancing, tattoos, entertainment, modesty, music, and all such disagreeable activities among Christians. These kind of personal convictions are called preferences – because these kinds of activities are not called sin in Scripture. And there's nothing wrong with you exercising your personal preferences as long as they are motivated by your love for God.

But if you ever try to legislate any personal preferences onto someone else, you are playing the Pharisee, and you are undermining God's gospel and proving your worship is worthless.

So maybe today God's Spirit has exposed a ruling love for the praise of men? Or a love for culture? And maybe today is an opportunity for you to repent from being everyone else's fruit-inspector, as you come back to the pure heart of undefiled religion.



Finally, Jesus' teaching calls each of us to **reexamine how we think about growing as a Christian.** Too often, we think we're following Jesus well if our outside looks good.

And of course, it's good to attend church, serve in ministry, read the Bible daily, spend more time in prayer, etc etc... but all those things can also be done by a religious Pharisee who is spiritually dead! So today's sermon challenges us to evaluate our own spiritual life and growth differently.

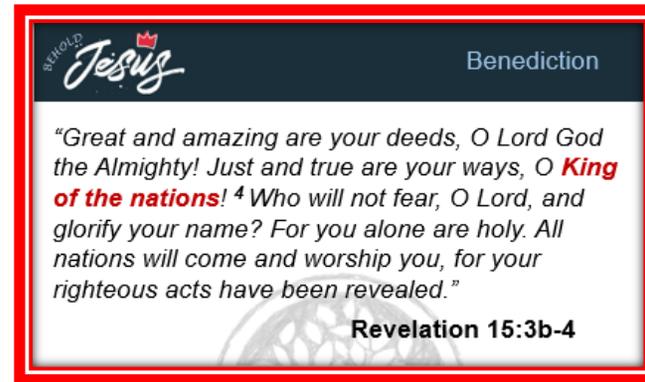
For example, we should always consider the desires and beliefs of our own heart before we evaluate the actions of our life. How is my relationship with God changing over time in terms of my desires, beliefs, and loyalties? What wants or desires are ruling my decisions in my life in this season?

When is the last time I repented of sin, and sincerely asked God or someone else for forgiveness? How is my view of my own sinfulness and need for God changing over time?

When is the last time my soul was overjoyed with a conscious awareness of God's love for me? How is my view of God's grace and mercy changing over time?

After all, Jesus came and did what we could have never done for ourselves – He paid for all our sin, and set us free from slavery to self-love, all so that we could experience the joy of worshipping Him out of a heart that sincerely knows and loves Him.

May God help us worship Him with purified hearts today.



*Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*  
**Revelation 15:3b-4**



**Let's pray.**

<<Yet Not I but Christ in Me>>

*Remember to take advantage of the online Downloads and links!*

**Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.**

## Recommended Resources on The Heart of Worship:

- 1 Samuel 16:6-7
- 2 Chronicles 24:20
- Isaiah 1:13-15; 29:13; 66:2-3
- Amos 5:21-24
- Matthew 5:20
- Mark 7:1-23
- Luke 11:38
- John 4:24
- Acts 10:1-33
- Romans 2:28-29
- Galatians 1:14; 2:12
- Colossians 2:8-19
- 1 Timothy 4:1-5
- Titus 1:15-16
- Hebrews 10:22
  
- <https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-surprising-truth-about-legalism/>
- <https://tonyreinke.com/2007/05/22/what-is-legalism/>
  
- *The Whole Christ*, Sinclair Ferguson
- *The Discipline of Grace*, Jerry Bridges
- *Finally Alive*, John Piper

## Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read Matthew 15:5-6. Are there any biblical commands that you knowingly excuse yourself from? Do you ever twist a selected Scripture passage as justification to dismiss your obedience to another Scripture passage? What does verse 6 say is the result of such attitudes towards God's Word?
2. Read Matthew 15:7-9. What is the definition of a hypocrite? Have you ever given "lip-service" to God externally, while your internal desires were opposed to God? What does verse 9 say is the result of this kind of worship?
3. Review Matthew 15:1-9. Can you think of any ways that our church spiritualizes preferences, or teaches our own human traditions as if they were God's Word? What should you do if you ever realize that you or someone else has imported spiritual authority into some human teaching or tradition?
4. Read Matthew 7:15-20. If God cares most about our heart, and not our externals, then why does He teach us to recognize false teachers by their fruits? What role do our works have if God only cares about our hearts?
5. Read John 3:3. Discuss how our greatest need is for God to cleanse our hearts, not for men to cleanse our hands. How is it possible for sinners to receive a purified heart?