**SBC – Feb. 27, 2022**

# 54

**Matt. 15:10-20 (NKJV)**

***“Defilement Is From Within”***

***Prayer:***

***Slide # 1***

***Theme***: *Christ the King*

***Outline:***

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the

 throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne

 by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom

 resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

***Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.***

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

The context of Matthew 15 finds Jesus around the last year of His earthly ministry. The hostility of the Jewish religious leaders toward Jesus continued to escalate. In short, they felt threatened by Jesus.

Jesus showed Himself to be Lord of the temple when He cleansed it of the money-changers early in His ministry (Jn. 2); He declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath (cf. Matt. 12:1-8); and now as we find in Matthew 15 Jesus in effect shows Himself to be Lord over what is acceptable worship.

This Lordship issue was the critical issue for the religious leaders which ultimately led to the reason they cried for His crucifixion.

In Matthew 15 a delegation of religious leaders from Jerusalem had come to Jesus seeking to discredit His ministry over the issue of ceremonial washing which Christ’s disciples did not strictly adhere to.

Contextually, this whole section from Matthew 15:1-20 is dealing with the legalistic issue of ceremonial washing of the hands before eating. Verse 2 and 20 are like bookends to this discussion.

***Slide # 2***

**Matthew 15:2 (NKJV)**

**2** “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they **do not wash their hands when they eat bread**.”

**Matthew 15:20 (NKJV)**

**20** These are the things which defile a man, but **to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”**

The whole issue is about the contrast between the external oral traditions and that of internal heart obedience which is indicative of true worship.

Jesus called out these religious leaders for putting their religious legalistic traditions above Scripture thus negating the Scripture. This perversion resulted in them following the doctrines of men instead of following the commandments of God in the matter of worship. Jesus called them hypocrites and said their worship was vain – meaning empty or worthless.

Well, when you are the highest religious leaders and respected with great admiration, and then Jesus calls your worship bogus – that really stings. They challenged Christ’s credibility on the basis of tradition and in turn Christ called them out as being totally illegitimate and their worship a farce on the basis of Scripture.

We pick up the narrative now at Matthew 15:10…

**Matthew 15:10–20 (NKJV)**

**10 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear and understand:**

Jesus now brings the crowd into this discussion because the influence of these religious leaders regarding legalistic traditions was great.

**11 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”**

The idea of “***defiles***” is to make one ceremonially unclean and therefore not able to approach God in worship. It is to make the sacred common or profane (secular) and therefore unacceptable to God.

Jesus was speaking fundamentally. Food by itself is neutral. It doesn’t spiritually defile a person. It is just food. It is not what goes in the mouth (food) that defiles a person, but rather what comes out of the mouth (that is words indicative of a defiled heart).

In one sweeping statement [Jesus] denounced the entire structure by which the rabbinical schools, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the religious leaders secured their hold on the multitudes. He labeled their religious rules and regulations, their exegesis, and their spirit-stifling, God-dishonoring, Bible contradicting, man-enslaving, soul-destroying, ego-building, Satan-serving traditions as worthless.

 ***– John Phillips***

That is doing a lot in one statement! But in effect that is what He did. He discredited their entire ceremonial washing system as being invalid.

Now how could Jesus say this? Under the law (and Christ was still under the Mosaic Law at this point) there were dietary restrictions for the Jews. Leviticus 11 said that the Jews could not eat meat from any animal that did not chew the cud or did not have cloven hooves. They could not eat fish unless it had scales and fins. Detailed instructions were given concerning what was clean or unclean (cf. Lev. 11:24, 39-40).

Jesus was not refuting that the Mosaic Law taught this, although later under the post-cross New Covenant all such regulations were removed. Again, note carefully that the issue here specifically relates to eating with unwashed hands which the law did not address except for certain qualified situations related to the priests, etc.

And even though the Law did forbid the Jews from eating certain things, yet those foods in and of themselves were not fundamentally impure – otherwise we should not be able to eat them now either – but we can (cf. Mk. 7:19).

***Slide # 3***

**1 Timothy 4:4–5 (NKJV)**

**4** For **every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;**

**5** for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

The point is the issue goes deeper than just the external use of food. It goes to the heart of the matter behind as to WHY the person does or does not eat.

***Slide # 4***

Real uncleanness lies not in food that passes through the body (v. 17), but in those qualities that dwell in the heart (vv. 18-19). Ceremonial laws find their justification in relation to moral laws; otherwise they lose their significance and become empty rituals.

 – ***Evangelical Commentary on the Bible***

In the OT the godly did take ceremonial uncleanness very serious. Daniel as a man of God refused to defile himself with the king’s delicacies in Daniel 1:8. The distinction between unclean and clean animals served as continual reminder that the Jews were a set apart holy people (cf. Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6). Jesus was not throwing all that aside.

***Slide # 5***

By this statement, Jesus is not abrogating the Levitical code (nor should Mk 7:19 be so interpreted), an abrogation not announced till after Pentecost (Acts 10-11), but was stating the principle that moral defilement is spiritual, not physical. Food is amoral (1 Tim. 4:3-5). Sin lies in the heart of the man who disobeys God and perverts its use. Even the defilement arising to a Jew from eating meat Levitically unclean was caused not by the food itself, but by the rebellious heart that acted in disobedience to God.

 – ***The Wycliffe Bible Commentary***

This is the KEY point Jesus is driving home. Before God the ultimate issue is about the heart – not merely the externals. The Jewish leaders had made it all about externals to the point that these external traditions trumped the Scripture itself. This is the mark of mere “form religion” – the mark of false religion.

Verse 11 where Jesus says not what goes into the mouth defiles, but rather what comes out of it in effect answered the question of verse 2 where the scribes and Pharisees asked why Christ’s disciples did not wash according to the tradition of the elders. Verse 11 essentially says those traditions are in error and invalid – that’s why they don’t follow those ridiculous traditions.

**12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”**

Verses 12-14 reflect what took place privately after Jesus and His disciples had withdrew from the crowd and entered a house as noted in Mark 7:17.

This is almost humorous. It’s almost like the disciples are feeling kind of bad about Jesus being so hard on the Pharisees. After all they were VIPs from Jerusalem. Dignitaries like this should have some respect – right?

As God’s people we want to be gracious, but sometimes people can seek to be so gracious that they fail to take a strong stand for truth. Sometimes we can be more concerned about offending people than we are about the compromise that offends God. That is a trap! Yes, we do always want to be gracious, but not at the expense of the truth.

***Slide # 6***

**Galatians 1:10 (HCSB)**

**10** For am I now trying to win the favor of people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? **If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NKJV)**

**4** But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even **so we speak, not as pleasing men**, **but God** who tests our hearts.

In contemporary culture, where political correctness is considered a sign of spiritual maturity, Jesus would certainly seem unspiritual. …Jesus wished His followers to see that the offense against God for laying aside His truth for the sake of tradition (cf. Mark 7:8-9) was far more serious than an offense against religionists who were misleading people. ***– Ed Glasscock***

It was evidently clear that the Pharisees were offended. I mean Jesus just flat out called them ***“hypocrites***” as seen in verse 7. And then He said their **worship was vain** because they followed man-centered teaching. By the time Jesus gets done – as we will see in the verses following, it gets even worse.

The word “offended” (Gk. skanalizo) means to be a stumbling block, or to cause to fall or cause to sin.

The idea is that the Pharisees were having a hard time with Jesus rebuking them for being man-followers instead of God-followers – for revering their traditions above the Word of God. This really troubled them.

Hypocrisy is always offended by the truth. – ***Ed Glasscock***

**13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.**

The language just got even stronger! Jesus is here flat out saying these esteemed religious leaders have no relationship with God and are not saved. They are not of God (cf. Mt. 3:9; 8:11-12).

We saw in Matthew 13 in the parable of the wheat and tares that it is the devil who sows “the sons of the wicked one” (13:38-39). Conversely it is God who plants the children of God.

The people of God in the OT are often pictured as a plant which has been planted by God (cf. Ps. 1:3; Isa. 5:1-7; 60:21; 61:3).

Those not planted by the heavenly Father are going to be “uprooted” – which means they are going to be destroyed. They are like weeds that will be extracted from God’s garden.

These plants were to be “rooted up” – not just cut down – dug out by the roots and cast from the program of the heavenly Father. Such is the fate of those who replace God’s truth and true worship with legalistic religion. – ***Ed Glasscock***

**14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”**

There are certain situations where we just need to leave people alone – especially religious leaders entrenched in false doctrine and leading people astray. Paul, in 2 Tim. 3:5 says we should turn away from hypocritical religious people who have a form of godliness but deny the life changing power of it in their practice.

Jesus didn’t say, “Try to engage them. Try to seek common ground.” No, He simply said, “Let them alone.” As noted previously, there is a time when we are not to “cast our pearls before swine” (Mt. 7:6). Just walk away! Just leave them alone!

Jesus then described these religious leaders as, “blind leaders of the blind”. What a pathetic condition. To be spiritually blind is to not see spiritual truth. And yet, here they were as blind leaders leading other people who are also blind. And what is the result? Well, both will fall into the ditch with the ditch ultimately representing hell. Blind leaders lead people to hell!

Ironically, Paul says in Romans 2:19 that the religious Jews were confident that they were “a guide to the blind”. It is amazing how blind guides can be so confident and yet be so totally blind and not have any idea what they are talking about. Amazingly these blind leaders often do get a following – and of course those following them are also blind because they are deceived.

 It was a scam that worked for months. In 1849, William Thompson prowled the streets of New York City looking for “marks,” people to swindle.

His approach was simple, yet effective. Appearing to be a gentleman, sophisticated and highbrow, Thompson would approach a complete stranger and strike up a polite conversation. After a few moments, he would ask his target, “Have you confidence in me to trust me with your watch until tomorrow?”

Surprisingly, many people obliged. Placing their confidence in Thompson’s honesty, they handed over their expensive timepieces, never to see them again. Thompson continued this ruse unabated until one day, a former victim recognized him and had him arrested. The *New-York Herald* dubbed him the Confidence Man.1 The name stuck and was applied to any trickster who followed Thompson’s disreputable example. Later, the term was shortened to *con man*.

 – ***Bruce Scott***

Their hypocrisy had blinded them. They were blind to their own sinfulness and also to God’s truth. They didn’t see spiritual reality for what it was and yet very confidently claimed to be the spiritual leaders of God’s people. False teachers are con-men!

These scribes and Pharisees claimed to be experts in the Law knowing the Word of God better than anyone else. But Jesus called them “blind guides of the blind”. Few things could have been more insulting than this description to those who prided themselves on their “religious knowledge”.

They failed to comprehend the real meaning of the Scriptures they took so much pride in understanding. A tragic end awaits the blind guides as well as those whom they guide. The critics’ rejection of Jesus was only one indication of their spiritual blindness.

 – ***Thomas Constable***

Once again, we see the clash between Jesus and the religious leaders was really over the issue of authority. They claimed to be the authentic interpreters of the Law but Jesus in authoritative tones in no uncertain terms assigned that role singularly to Himself as Lord of the Law. This conflict over “religious authority” would ultimately lead to the religious leaders seeking to destroy Jesus which culminated in the cross.

**15 Then Peter answered and said to Him, “Explain this parable to us.”**

The sense of parable here has a different nuance than what we saw in Matt. 13. In Matt. 13 the parables were of such a nature as to conceal the truth from the multitudes (cf. 13:11). But here in verse 10 Jesus called on the multitude to ***“Hear and understand***”.

The idea here of “parable” refers to a short pithy statement which Peter found to be obscure and unclear. What Jesus was trying to say was still unclear in the mind of Peter who evidently spoke for all the disciples as noted in the word “us”. Years later Peter was still grappling with this issue as seen in Acts 10.

***Slide # 7***

**Acts 10:14 (NKJV)**

**14** But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

We need to understand that the dietary laws of the Jews were considered sacred by all – and properly understood they were as already noted.

Jesus’ teaching…may have been the most astounding the people had ever heard, because few things were more sacred to the Jews of that day than their dietary laws. – ***John MacArthur***

Even for the disciples it was hard to grasp what Jesus was saying because the dietary culture of the Jews was so intense.

**16 So Jesus said, “Are you also still without understanding?**

Jesus responded with a mild rebuke indicating that by this time they should have understood. It was understandable that the unbelieving multitudes didn’t get it, but the believing disciples should have gotten it. Jesus had constantly been teaching them that inward spiritual reality takes precedence over outward religious ritual (cf. Mt. 12:1-8). Yet, they were slow to put it all together.

**17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?**

Jesus here got kind of blunt and graphic with them – and really simple too. Jesus is saying that physical foods are amoral. In and of themselves they are not spiritually defiling. They simply enter into the body and pass through the digestive system and are then eliminated. This process, in and of itself, is neither spiritual or defiling. It is just a natural process regarding physical realities.

[Jesus] explained that true defilement is moral, not physical. Edible foods are not intrinsically clean or unclean. In fact, no material thing is evil in itself; it is the abuse of a thing that is wrong.

 ***– William MacDonald***

**18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.**

This is Christ’s KEY premise – stated in verse 11 and again here in verse 18. Christ is saying its not a matter of what goes INTO the mouth that defiles, but rather what comes OUT of the mouth from the HEART. The real core issue of what defiles is found in the HEART. Spiritual life related to worship is essentially a matter of the HEART.

The HEART is the moral center of a person. It is the place of motives, desire, and the will. It is the place where choices are made (cf. Acts 5:4; Heb. 4:12).

For illustration purposes picture the HEART as the well of a person. You let down a bucket into the well and fill up the bucket. Then the water is brought up and delivered through the mouth of the well. If the bucket brings forth putrid/defiled water, it is because this is what is brought up out of the well of the heart. It is ultimately what is in the HEART that defiles a person!

The real issue of who and what we are is all about the condition of our HEART. Defiled hearts are the problem! Defiled hearts are what render our worship unacceptable to God. It’s all about the heart.

***Slide # 8***

**Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV)**

**23** Keep your **heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

The Jews had made their religion all about outward externals – missing the point that before God it is really all about the inward condition of the heart. And when the heart is right that is reflected in the life. It is reflected in our attitude towards God; and it is reflected in how we treat people.

But what about the Law – wasn’t that all about outward conformity? No, it wasn’t. Even though the Jews were commanded to keep the law there was a more fundamental HEART reality that was to be in place.

***Slide # 9***

**Deuteronomy 10:16 (NKJV)**

**16** Therefore **circumcise the foreskin of your heart**, and be stiff-necked no longer.

Circumcision of the heart figuratively described repentance that removes hardened rebellion against God in the heart and is now soft and sensitive in responding to Him. It was then out of a circumcised heart that Israel was to love God with all their heart (cf. Lev. 26:41; Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4).

***Slide # 10***

**Deuteronomy 6:5–6 (NKJV)**

**5** You shall love the Lord your God with **all your heart**, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

**6** “And these words which I command you today shall be **in your heart.**

**Slide # 11**

**Deuteronomy 30:6 (NKJV)**

**6** And the Lord your God will **circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants**, to **love the Lord your God with all your heart** and with all your soul, that you may live.

The most fundamental issue is always about the HEART. When the heart is right with God then the whole of life is aligned with it. The Jews were to keep the Law – not as a means of salvation – but as the fruit borne out of a right heart – a heart of faith that wants to please God.

***Slide # 12***

**Romans 2:28–29 (NKJV)**

**28** For he is not a Jew who is one **outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is outward **in the flesh**;

**29** but he is a Jew who is one **inwardly;** and circumcision is that of **the heart**, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

So Jesus was not teaching something NEW, but rather bringing about correction that aligned with God’s truth all along. Acceptable WORSHIP always begins in the heart. Spiritual defilement is always about the HEART, not merely outward ordinances. Now if the heart has no regard for the God-ordained ordinances, that is at root a heart defilement problem. If the heart wants to obey God out of reverence that is reflective of a circumcised heart that is right with God. It’s all about the HEART. And that is Jesus’ point!

Christ’s point was this: What a person IS determines what they say or do and not the other way around. It’s not DOING religious things that makes you sanctified. Rather, it’s being right in your HEART toward God that then brings forth the good fruit of obedience. BEING always comes first before DOING! Internal is before external! This is what the Jews missed. They put the emphasis on DOING instead of on BEING, they put the emphasis on the EXTERNAL instead of on the INTERNAL.

True religion must deal with people’s basic nature and not just with externals. The Pharisees and scribes had become so preoccupied with the externals that they failed to deal with what is more basic and important, namely, a real [HEART] relationship with God.

 – ***Thomas Constable***

**19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.**

What we have here is an X-ray of the human heart. It is the moral center of a person. And the uncircumcised, uncleansed, unregenerated heart is UGLY! People put on an external veneer but down deep it is UGLY. We dress it up with religion but down deep before God that changes nothing.

Matthew here gives us a catalogue of 7 ugly sins while the cross reference in Mark 7:21-22 mentions 13 sins. These lists are not comprehensive, but rather representative. All of these sins lurk as potential inside all of us. Sin is potential before it is actual. But the flesh is capable of any of these sins and all of us – even believers still have the flesh – the old Adamic sin nature.

The Bible does deal with the FRUIT of sin, but even more fundamentally it deals with the ROOT of it as found in the heart. We are not sinners because we sin – rather we sin because we are inherently born sinners. In other words, before anything else we are sinners at heart before we are sinners in action. Yes, we sin in thought, word, and deed, but at core it is first and fundamentally an issue of the HEART! It all starts there!

Jesus said, ***“For out of heart proceed evil thoughts…”.*** Appropriately the first thing mentioned are evil thoughts. Actions are born out of thoughts. The idea of “evil thoughts” is that of “evil schemes”. This is the formulating in the mind of doing wrong of one kind or another.

Out of the heart come “murderers”. Murder is the intentional killing of someone – taking their life. Murder is not a matter of self-defense or killing someone in a legitimate war, etc.. Rather murder is the premeditated taking of human life because of hatred in the heart. The seed of murder is first hatched in the heart in the form of HATRED. Actually, the Bible shows that HATRED in the heart is the spiritual equivalent of murder.

***Slide # 13***

**1 John 3:15 (NKJV)**

**15** Whoever **hates** his brother is a **murderer,** and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

To say, “I wish he was dead” reveals a murderous heart even if you haven’t physically killed the person. It reveals “murder” is in the heart.

Out of the heart proceed adulteries. Adultery begins in the heart! Jesus in Matt. 5:28 said, “***whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*** Adultery specifically deals with marital unfaithfulness. It is a violation of the covenant relationship formed in marriage. In marriage we vow to be faithful to our marriage partner. Marriage involves an intimate covenant relationship that is to be shared with no one else. Lusting for someone who is not your marriage partner is adultery in thought form.

Out of the heart proceed “***fornications***”. Adultery speaks specifically to sexual unfaithfulness in the marriage relationship while the word “***fornications”*** is more broad and speaks to any kind of sexual perversion.

Fornication is the Greek word *porneia* from which we get our English word pornography. It refers to any and all types of illicit and immoral sexual behavior. Looking at porn is committing fornication in the heart! Again, all forms of immorality first begin in the HEART.

***Slide # 14***

**Hebrews 13:4 (NKJV)**

**4** Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but **fornicators** and **adulterers** God will judge.

Most all of us have probably been guilty of either adultery or fornication on some level. If we haven’t fallen into actual physical adultery, we have lusted after someone who is not our spouse. If we haven’t actually fornicated in our hearts we have entertained various kinds of sexual deviancy. You see it’s not just a matter of what you actually DO, but a matter of the lusts of the HEART.

But praise God for GRACE and the cleansing that is found through the blood of Jesus and through faith in Him. It’s why we love Him so! There is no “***holier than thou***” in the family of God, but simply trophies of GRACE that champion our Savior and what He has done for us. He has cleansed and changed our hearts!

***Slide # 15***

**Revelation 1:5 (NKJV)**

**5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. **To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,**

This is what Jesus did for us! But how do we appropriate the cleansing of His blood to our defiled hearts?

**Slide # 16**

**Acts 15:8–9 (NKJV)**

**8** So God, who knows **the heart**, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,

**9** and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.**

But what about when a believer falls into sin? Positionally, nothing changes. We continue to be children of God. The once for all blood payment for our sin continues to be all-sufficient no matter what. But our walk is affected! We lose our joy. We are out of fellowship. The Spirit is grieved (Eph. 4:32). That is a miserable place to be.

And God doesn’t allow His children to just stay there. Hebrews 12 says God disciplines all His true children to build holiness into their lives (cf. Heb. 12:7-11).

When my children were born into my family they were positioned there PERMANENTLY. They are now FOREVER my children. I will never disown them. No matter what they may do, they will always be my children. However, growing up they would sometimes do wrong which would affect their fellowship with their father. It would affect our fellowship. I would warn them. I would discipline them. I would call them to get right.

 And so it is with God. Sometimes in our walk we get our feet dirty. We don’t need the bath of regeneration, but we do need to get right in our walk and we do that through confession.

***Slide # 17***

**1 John 1:9 (NKJV)**

**9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus addressed the need for “foot cleansing” related to our walk versus the bath of cleansing related to salvation as seen in John 13.

***Slide # 18***

**John 13:10 (NKJV)**

**10** Jesus said to him, “He who is **bathed** needs only to wash his **feet,** but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”

***Slide # 19***

The underlying imagery is of an oriental returning from the public baths to his house. His feet would acquire defilement and require cleansing, but not his body. So, the believer is cleansed as before the law from all sin “once for all” (Heb. 10:1-12), but needs throughout his earthly life to bring his daily sins to the Father in confession, so that he may abide in unbroken fellowship… Typically, the order of approach to the presence of God was first the…(bronze) altar of sacrifice, then the laver of cleansing (cf. Ex. 30:17-21, 40:6-7).

 – ***C.I. Scofield***

The point Christ was making is that the place of spiritual defilement is always INTERNAL – it’s always a HEART problem. This is what defiles us. Unbelievers are defiled by sin and only the blood of Christ can cleanse from sin. As believers when we get our feet dirty in our walk, our position in Christ doesn’t change, but we need to apply the cleansing of confession and to get right in our walk. Thus we keep our HEART clean before God!

Jesus said out of the heart proceed **“thefts”.** I hate to admit it but before I was saved, I was a thief pilfering this, that, and the other thing from places where I worked. I used to even ponder how to commit the perfect crime without ever being found out. I deviously thought that no one else could know about it. That way no one could squeal on me.

**But it’s like that old story** about the thief who looked this way and that way – they looked in every direction just to make sure no one was watching and then they went for it. But they made just one mistake. They forgot to look UP! God is always watching and He knows everything!

***Slide # 20***

**Hebrews 4:12–13 (NKJV)**

**12** For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of **the heart.**

**13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but **all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him** to whom we must give account.

Out of the heart proceeds “***false witness***”. A false witness does not tell the truth. He gives forth untrue testimony. A false witness is a liar.

And out of the heart proceed “***blasphemies***”. The word blasphemies (Gk. *blasphemia*) refers to irreverent or abusive speech and can include the idea of slander.

The Greek word (diabolos) for “devil” literally means "**slanderer**." Blasphemy is injurious speech that seeks to tear down another. Back in Matt. 12:34 Jesus said, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

The mouth tells on the heart! Want to know what is going on in a person’s heart – just listen to their speech. If blasphemies are coming forth it reveals a defiled heart and that is not right with God.

So much for inherent human goodness. Jesus paints a completely different picture. If you believe that people are basically good, then you might try harder to just be a good person which leads to all kinds of religious legalism as practiced by the Jews.

But the problem at core is a heart problem as brought out by Jesus. This is what defiles. The problem is not an external one but an internal one. And the only solution to this is a saving faith in Christ as Lord and Savior that changes a person from the inside out.

Jesus focused on the HEART. What a person is in the core of their being – in their heart invariably comes out in their life in terms of what they say, what they do, and what they value.

The first pastor of this church was a man named Harold Sanders. Back in the day he was the Dean of Men at Grace Bible College where I went to school. His life verse that he often quoted to us was Proverbs 23:7. And since he always quoted it in old King James here it is…

***Slide # 21***

**Proverbs 23:7 (AV)**

For as he **thinketh in his heart**, **so is he**…

Back in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus described His true followers as those who are pure in heart.

***Slide # 22***

**Matthew 5:8 (NKJV)**

**8** Blessed are **the pure in heart**, For **they shall see God.**

Being a true believer in Christ results in a heart transformation. Yes, we still struggle with the flesh, but at the same time we have experienced a HEART transformation that changes us.

**20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”**

What defiles a person are the moral issues of the heart, not eating with unwashed hands. The external does not defile a person morally. Rather moral defilement is entirely an internal matter of the heart!

If sin had not been in you, it could not have come out. All the trouble in the world does not put sin in the Christian. It brings it out.

 – ***Charles Spurgeon***

The world cries we need more education, we need cultural change, we need social reform, we need revolution. But none of these things are the answer because they don’t deal with the fundamental problem of the defiled human heart. We need a new heart! We need to be born again and only God can make that happen and He does so when we put our faith in Christ.

***Slide # 23***

**Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV)**

**26** I will give you **a new heart** and put a new spirit within you; I will **take the heart of stone** out of your flesh and give you **a heart of flesh**.

**The story is told of a man who was a perfectionist**. There was a clock at the church he attended that would never keep the right time. It was habitually too fast or too slow. So he put a placard on the wall above it with the words: “Don’t blame my hands- the trouble lies deeper.”

And so it is with people. When their hands do wrong, or their lips, or their feet, the trouble lies deeper still. The trouble lies deep in the heart – so deep that only God’s work in the heart can change it.

Such is the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit – who working through the Word of God brings about faith in the heart – thus bringing about true change and cleansing. This is what the Bible calls being born again. Have you been cleansed? Have you been born again?

This cleansing takes place when we put our faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Have you done that? Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power – only He can cleanse and change you. Only He can change you from the inside out. Only the Lord can change our heart!

Have you been to Jesus for the changing power? Come! Jesus invites you, “Come to Me…and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28). Come!