

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org).

**Date:** February 3, 2019

**Sermon Title:** The Tragedy of Spiritual Hypocrisy

Sermon Series: Matthew

Text: Matthew 15:1-20

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Date: February 3, 2019  
Title: The Tragedy of Spiritual Hypocrisy  
Text: Matthew 15:1-20  
Theme: Until you take off your mask and accept “you can’t, but God can, and Jesus did,” you cannot be saved. The Yoke of Jesus is only known through the unmasking.

#### Introduction:

Jesus identifies the Pharisees and Scribes as **Spiritual Hypocrites**. Their hypocrisy shows itself in the keeping of Tradition. But it isn’t the tradition, but rather the weight they put on the tradition. They are assuming that what they do changes your heart. It can make it unclean. Jesus correct this by noting how the heart is already unclean. By implication, He says, not only is there noting you can do to make your heart unclean; it is equally true that there is nothing you can do to make your heart clean.

This hypocrisy isn’t the kind we hear of when a preacher commits adultery while preaching against adultery. It is the hypocrisy that says what I do can either make my heart good or bad.

Our Lord’s word choice for hypocrite is transliterated directly from the Greek language and means, “An actor under an assumed character (stage-player).” Thus, the mask. We all wear masks and it is in the wearing of our masks that we damn our souls.

- Jesus was reordering their world. He was dismantling their power base.
- Everyone had to come to Jerusalem and to the Temple and through the priest system to worship God. This put the religious establishment on a social / spiritual pedestal. They did not like the idea that they couldn’t work their way to God. They wanted to believe they could. If such were the case, then Jesus wasn’t / isn’t necessary. Friends that is a problem.
- Jesus was knocking it down and He was a threat to their system.
- 70 miles from Jerusalem to Genneseret

“The passage unfolds step-by-step. First there is the challenge by the teachers and the response to them by Jesus (1-9). Then there is the report that Jesus turned to teach the crowd on the real source of uncleanness (10, 11). Third, the disciples ask about offending the Pharisees, and Jesus answered them with a parable that then had to be explained (12-20). In effect, then, the teachers raise the question, and Jesus answers them, explains his answer to the crowds, and explains his dealings with the teachers to the disciples. There was one occasion, but Jesus has three separate audiences to address, with separate issues.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **OUTLINE:**

- I. The Accusation (vv. 1, 2 [Pharisees / Scribes])

- You disregard our traditions
- First, what is a tradition?
- Definition of **TRADITION**
  - a. **An inherited pattern** of thought, action, or behavior (such as a religious practice or a social custom)
  - b. **A belief or story** or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are **commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable.**<sup>2</sup>
- Second, what's the problem with tradition?
  - a. Initially, nothing.
  - b. Potentially, it dulls us to the truth; it masks our being; and it has the power to blind us to what is true.

Q. What is the PROBLEM?

A. When the KEEPING of the TRADITION becomes a means of measuring one's own spirituality and that of others.

Here is the problem, practice never defines spirituality. Spirituality is defined by the "heart." From the heart practice originates.

"While Jesus has been feeding, healing, and teaching the people in Galilee, showing his compassion and care for them, a delegation of Pharisees and scribes (lawyers) comes out from Jerusalem to investigate the fame of Jesus. Their concern is not a pastoral one for the people of Galilee but rather for the ministry of Jesus. **These guys represent the religious elite; while their legal and practical authority is nearly non-existent (because of Rome) they still have great influence with the common people. Everyone has a system they've put together of who's good, who's bad, who's in, who's out and when we put that system up to others they usually fail in some way to our standards while we somehow always seem to measure up to our own. We place our faith in a system then we sit back and say 'let the system play out, if I succeed in it it's because I'm awesome, if you fail it's because you're not.'**"<sup>3</sup>

"Jesus, through Isaiah, is clear you can lead people with fear to unhealthy places. Their worship is vain, their teaching is from men (meaning corrupted) and not from God. **The religious elites, charged with pointing people to God are in fact leading people farther away.** This seems hopeless and burdensome, yet it is amazing to see God's response to the emptiness of vain worship with the fullness of His presence and power! When contrasting the doctrines of men with the truth of God, the first fades while the other stands. God is good to His people, he doesn't leave us along to continue blind to the truth. He sends His Son to bear witness to the truth and call us to a fuller understanding of God, sin, and our response to both."<sup>4</sup>

## THE PROBLEM

Washing your hands before you eat.

- Has nothing to do with the Word of God.

Dishonoring your parents by serving God.

- Your first responsibility. Honor/obey your parents.
- People in ministry struggle with this. They leave their parents and then claim they cannot care for them because they are serving God. Their first responsibility is to their parents. Serve God by serving your parents.

Both actions were self-serving and pseudo-spirituality. Both said, "Look at me."

## THE PROBLEM

"Many biblical precepts are expressed as broad principles without legalistic detail. For example, "work" is prohibited on the Sabbath yet is never defined legally. **This ambiguity, which allowed for some flexibility, was considered a liability by Pharisaic Judaism.** In an attempt to make sure the command proper was never violated, the rabbis created secondary, rigid rules which, if followed, would theoretically prevent a person from ever violating the biblical command itself. This was known as 'putting a fence around the law.' Such nonbiblical rules (e.g., the Sabbath day's journey) are prescribed exhaustively in the Talmud, but this burdensome 'tradition' is contrary to the spirit of biblical law (Matt. 15:3; 23:4).

"For the Pharisees, the categories of "clean" and "unclean" become the vocabulary for sorting and differentiating much of their spiritual and social border patrols."<sup>5</sup>

### II. The Rebuttal (vv. 3-9)

- Your traditions void the Word of God

[AKUROO] - 3x in NT / "Invalidate, disannul; make of none effect"

How in the name of all that is truly holy is this possible?

- "And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matt. 15:6).
- "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13).
- "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Gal. 3:17).

- You are a hypocrite.

Hypocrisy is built on law. We assume everyone is keeping the law except us. In our failure we wish to communicate success.

This is a quote from [name], "nobody wants to live holy lives anymore." He said this to me a couple of years ago, we haven't had a friendship in over ten years. It wasn't directly linked to why he leaves so many churches, but I inferred that meaning by the larger context. He wasn't aiming the comment at me, just pointing the sawed-off shotgun in my direction and pulling the trigger. This stood out from your outline. "Everyone has a system they've put together of who's good, who's bad, who's in, who's out and when we put that system up to others they usually fail in some way to (meet) our standards while we somehow always seem to measure up to our own. We place our faith in a system then we sit back and say "let the system play out, if I succeed in it it's because I'm awesome, if you fail it's because you're not."

Yes, we all have the system, but few are so thoroughly deceived by their reflection in the mirror as [name]. It's not pride when he lives up to his list of "who's good." He's just holy...and I'm not. He's not being judgmental when he points out my flaw...it's just so obvious to him, and obviously a blind spot to me. He's only pointing this out to me because "he loves me." It didn't go well the last time he used those words to manipulate me (see "we haven't been friends for ten years"). Love doesn't seek its own. Sorry for **my** shotgun blast. [Name] and I were close for a long time. He's always thought too much of himself, but his current state is troubling to me. I miss him, but will not follow him down the bottomless pit of self-deception. No matter how hard we try, we'll never measure up. It is only when we face that fact that our toes finally touch bottom. Only then can we face the grotesque image in the mirror. There is no ten step system...no amount of cosmetic surgery can fix that much ugly, it requires a whole new man. So, can we now live any way we want? May it never be. Why would we want to celebrate the ugly? What then? Celebrate the one who has solved our ugly problem. There is no room in that equation for itinerate cosmetic surgeons (judges).<sup>6</sup>

Robert Redford was walking one day through a hotel lobby. A woman saw him and followed him to the elevator. "Are you the real Robert Redford?" she asked him with great excitement. As the doors of the elevator closed, he replied, "Only when I am alone!"

## THE INTENT

Jesus makes clear that his interests are not about keeping appearances but about the heart.

If Jesus was concerned about appearances, He would not have been a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

- <sup>10</sup> "Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?' <sup>12</sup> But when Jesus heard this, He said, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" (Matt. 9:10-13).
- "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt. 11:19).

Notice the following two verses.

- Colossians 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly

mind, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. 20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) --in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 **These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.**

- 2 Tim. 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 **holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power;** Avoid such men as these.

What you think and why you do what you do is far more important than what you do.

### III. The Principle (vv. 10-11 [The Crowd])

- What you do isn't what you are; what you are is what you do. It only flows one way.

"Teaching: Jesus explained to the crowd that what went into a man's mouth did not make him unclean, but what came forth (15:10, 11). The Old Testament had a lot to say about clean and unclean (for which see the discussions in commentaries or in word study books). Everything was classified as either clean or unclean, and what was unclean was not allowed in the temple. So defilements, diseases, sins, contaminations, discharges and the like made a person unclean. The Pharisees were rigid in observing the laws of cleanness as well as the Sabbath observances and the tithes. In the process they were so concerned with the outward observance of these defilements and contacts with things unclean that they failed to realize that the real defilement was sin. The diseases, discharges, and defilements that made a person unclean were things in life that were the result of the presence of sin and death. To observe the outward rituals and miss the connection with sin was a waste of time. The real source of uncleanness was the human heart, as Jesus will say shortly. To harbor sin (such as hatred and murder for Jesus) and wash hands with ritual washing was hypocritical."<sup>7</sup>

### IV. The Explanation (vv. 12-20 [The Disciples])

What is of interest is that 1) Jesus says nothing outside makes you unclean, 2) in addition, He says your wickedness comes from your heart, and finally 3) He does not tell you how to have a good / clean heart.

#### A. The explanation concerning the Pharisees and Scribes (vv. 12-14)

"The religious elites claim so confidently this is how God works, but yet Jesus says they are not sent from God the Father. **The fruit of their teaching is evident in the consequences it leads in those that follow it.** People are still able to pursue their own selfish desires while avoiding their responsibilities, all while looking like they're holy and pursuing God."<sup>8</sup>

B. The explanation concerning the principle (vv. 15-20)

**The Application of Jesus**

“v. 10-11, 15-16 Peter didn’t get it. Jesus said, what you eat is no big deal. Sin doesn’t begin in the stomach, it begins in the heart. But Peter had been raised a good Jew – that there was some things you simply are not to eat. Peter won’t get it until Acts 10 when he has a great vision.

v. 17-20 Jesus says, what you eat may make you sick, but it won’t make you a sinner. Unhealthy, but not unholy. It’s not about the hands, but the heart. Sin starts on the inside and works its way out, not the other way around. Sin is always ‘potential’ before it becomes ‘actual.’”<sup>9</sup>

- First, you are slow. Think about what we have seen and experienced up to this point in our story.
- Second, what you put in, isn’t the issue
- Third, your heart is the issue.
- Fourth, only God can change your heart
- Finally, you need to guard what you put into your head because it will come out of your heart.

Notice how nothing good comes out of the heart.

“Fake it until you become it.”

This might be true in the secular world, but it is not true in the Jesus world.

This does not mean you avoid what you do not want to do. But it does mean life begins in the heart.

- Cf. Matthew 12. Unless and until your heart is changed you will not confess Jesus is King.

THE INTENT

Only King Jesus can change your heart. When the heart is changed, everything changes.

**No amount of self-help will change your heart. The heart is beyond your reach. Only God can change your heart.**

The reason the Pharisees and their ilk rejected John and Jesus is because their hearts were bad.

The reason others accepted John and Jesus is because their hearts were good.

There is no way their evil hearts are going to confess Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- Remember when Jesus chastises the Pharisees as whited graves (Matt. 23:27)?

Confession comes out a good heart. Rejection comes out of a bad heart.

- Remember the parable of the soils (Matt. 13)?
- Remember the tree is known by its fruit (Matt. 12)?

Unless and until GOD changes your heart, it will continue to speak wicked words and commit atrocious acts.

Thus, when Jesus says you will be rewarded based on what you have done (Matt. 16:27) and what you have said (Matt. 12:36, 37), it is all coming out of the heart. The issue is whether or not you have received John and Jesus. Have you confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord?

### **A WORD ABOUT THE HEART**

First, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it (Jer. 17:9)

Do not trust your heart as your moral compass or as a means of making decisions. Trust the objective Word of God.

Much of what my heart tells me is self-centered and self-serving.

My intellect, on the other hand, grounded in the Word of God leads me correctly.

- <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

Second, we are to guard our hearts for from it flows life (Prov. 4:23)

Finally, we believe in Jesus from the heart

- <sup>9</sup>“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; <sup>10</sup>for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Rom. 10:9, 10).

It’s all about the heart. Do you believe? When you confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, it comes from your “heart.”

### **THE PROPHET**

Listen to HIM

(Matt. 17:5)

### **Shepherding the Sheep: WHAT’S NEXT?**

Here is the problem with rules and the idea of personal / external holiness.

- First, holiness is not something to attain. As Christians in Christ, holiness is something to be enjoyed.
- Second, we think we can obey them without failure. We think holiness is something we have to prove to others!
- Second, failed obedience produces punishment.
- Third, because we cannot keep the written code, we modify it so that we can by adding to it. These additions make void the Word of God.
- Finally, we are always afraid of being found out as if no one else struggles and fails in their religious affections. The woman caught in adultery: He that is without sin cast the first stone (John 8:7)

## **THE PROBLEM**

As it relates to the vertical; it is not the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law that is “required.”

Remember Matthew 12 and the Sabbath

Take the entire Law and Jesus reduces it to two thoughts: Love God; Love one another.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/22-jesus-and-traditions-elders-matthew-15:1-20>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tradition>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.damascusroadchurch.org/sermons/sermon/2014-12-14/defiled-without-jesus-matthew-15:1-20>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.damascusroadchurch.org/sermons/sermon/2014-12-14/defiled-without-jesus-matthew-15:1-20>

<sup>5</sup> <https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/non-rcl-starters/matthew-15:1-20-2/>

<sup>6</sup> [insight from a friend, via email]

<sup>7</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/22-jesus-and-traditions-elders-matthew-15:1-20>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.damascusroadchurch.org/sermons/sermon/2014-12-14/defiled-without-jesus-matthew-15:1-20>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gbcdecatur.org/sermons/TruthOrTradition.html>