

Matthew 14:34-15:20

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[0:00] When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all who were ill to him and said, For God said, Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain. Their teachings are merely human rules.

Jesus called the crowd to him and said, Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.

Then the disciples came to him and asked, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this? He replied, Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.

Leave them. They are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. Peter said, Explain the parable to us. Are you still so dull?

[1:42] Jesus asked them. Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them.

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them. Now, if you're just joining us, and I see that there are a few folks just joining us for the first time, which is wonderful, we're working our way through Matthew's Gospel. We've been saying that Matthew is writing primarily with a Jewish audience in mind.

He's helping them to answer a fundamental question that is of paramount importance to them. And it is this, it is, Are you, Jesus, the one that God promised right throughout the Old Testament would come and save us?

The Hebrew name for the one that was promised was Messiah. The Greek for the term, for the name Messiah is Christ. Are you just Jesus? Are you, are you Jesus, the Messiah, Jesus Christ?

[2:55] And if, if you kind of come this morning and you're looking into Christianity for the first time or re-looking into it, in one way or another, that is the question, isn't it? Are you Jesus, just a mere teacher, maybe a prophet, maybe a sort of political radical, or are you, as you claimed and as your followers claimed you to be, the Son of God, come to seek and to save the lost?

Is it possible that this Galilean carpenter's son, or so it was thought, really could be the Savior of the world, of all the generations? It's interesting that the historian, not the actor, Tom Holland, has observed that Jesus Christ, as he looked into, as agnostic, as an atheist, he, as he looked into Western history, he observed that actually Jesus Christ is the single biggest influence in that Western history.

That true Christianity, he noticed, not the politically hijacked kind, but true Christianity, brought time and again into our history the necessary self-correctives that saved us from ourselves and that corresponded with a massive turnaround in faith and trust in God.

So in the first centuries, as Christianity gripped, it was gripping hearts, it changed society, raising the status of women, children, and the newly born.

By the end of the Middle Ages, as we were brought out for the darkness of superstition, we were brought out by what? By the European Reformation, which meant that reading was no longer the privilege of a few, and grace by faith, salvation by grace, and not by works, gripped people's hearts and imaginations and transformed their lives as they could read about it for themselves in the Bible.

[4:55] Or in the late 1700s, believers like Wilberforce leading the charge against the brutal and morally repugnant slave trade. Or in the 1800s, bringing us back from the brink of the spread of the bloodstained French Revolution when revival broke out of the Christian faith through the preaching of Whitefield and the Wesleys.

People's lives embittered and raging against the system found that their hearts were changed, their lives, their priorities, given over to grace and the goodness of God.

And correspondingly, the pubs were emptied, crime dropped, revolution was averted as hearts were gripped by amazing grace. So, is he the one to come?

And what kind of one is he? It's a fundamental question for all of us. And history kind of begs us also to ask that question. And these are the very things that Matthew is unpacking for us, for his first readership, but also for every generation of those who explore it right up to the modern day as we look at it together.

So now, you may be sort of thinking and trying to get your head into the passage and sort of trying to marry up the great claims that I've just made about Jesus Christ and his ability to shape world history and sort of square off with this passage today, which seems on the outside just a question of whether you should wash your hands before you eat.

[6:33] I mean, last week, last week, I mean, that was stuff you get your teeth into, wasn't it? I mean, it was amazing. Feeding in the 5,000, walking on water. It was brilliant. I repent of any such actions and dramatizations that I may have previously done.

I had a wee scan on the YouTube and thought, oh my word, as I was doing the rowing thing, it looks like Mr. Bean had jumped onto this stage. Sorry about that. But this week, well, this week's completely different, isn't it?

Because we've got this bunch of guys coming up, verse 1, chapter 15, from Jerusalem. Now, that's a three- to four-day walk on foot and they're coming with this question, verse 2, why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?

They don't wash their hands before they eat. And you're sort of thinking, well, why has Matthew included this? I mean, who really cares? And at first glance, you may be justified in sort of thinking that.

But I guess the next question we need to ask is, well, I mean, this is inspired scripture. Why did Matthew, actually, why did the Lord, by his Spirit, lead Matthew to kind of inspire Matthew to include this next and have this passage there at all?

[7:51] Is there something here that gets to the nub of the things about who Jesus is? This great I am, this greater Moses we discovered last week who's coming to deliver a new and greater exodus of the people of God.

Well, of course, I think the answer is yes. Yes, there is. Because their question, which seems kind of random to us in some ways, allows him to reveal what he did, is the heart of the problem and that he has come to fix to begin this new spiritual exodus of people who are, who discover amazing grace, new life in Christ, their eternity changed.

Verse 8, that their hearts are actually far from the Lord's. And rather than leading these Pharisees, leading people to the Lord, they're actually leading them away from God.

That their religion is just lip service based on, verse 9, human rules, and it's not just useless, it's dead. All the effort that they're putting in is in vain.

And actually, Jesus, in coming to bring this new exodus, actually an exodus, away from these very things to lead them out of the slavery, the whole, the pit of non-faith that these Pharisees have been introducing amongst the people of God.

[9:18] So let's briefly unpack this passage. Again, apologies for the titles, they're so unimaginative, but in a way, they help us get through, hopefully. So we're going to look at the tradition of the elders and what's all that about.

Then we're going to look about breaking of the commandments that Jesus talks about. Then we're going to look at this kind of inside-out, not outside-in principle that Jesus talks about. And then we'll come and land on looking at the one who has made us clean that will hopefully lead us to the table. So, the tradition of the elders. I say this all the time and I mentioned it already, that I assume every week that there are people in the room who know nothing about Christianity.

Christianity. And I love that. We love that. That you're just looking into it and you thought, actually, I want to find out about God's church. It's a good place. You look up the internet and cornerstone or

somebody's invited you as a friend.

We're so glad that you're here. And maybe you're just looking at it, you've looked at this passage and thinking, I do not have a scooby-doo. What is going on here? What this means?

[10:16] And you know, that's actually partly why we just sort of work our way through a passage like this so we can unpack it and kind of help one another to understand it. Because actually, most of us who've been Christians for a long time look at this and think pretty much the same thing.

So, it's helpful for us all to kind of look at it. I'll come back to the verses at the end of chapter 14 at the end. So, let's pick up at chapter 15, verse 1. So, we have these Pharisees, these teachers of the law, this long journey up from Jerusalem and they're asking this question.

But I just want to stop there because the first question you might have is, well, who are the Pharisees? Let me give you a brief history sidebar. In the second century BC, 200 years before Jesus, there was a massive Jewish revolt against the Greek rule.

Now, remember just how things worked. They kind of had the Babylonians, had a massive empire. Then there was Alexander the Greek. The Greeks had a massive empire. And then the Romans, who are now in power, took over from the Greeks.

So, we're in the kind of Greek period where the Greeks were ruling that area. And in that area, they were outlawing Judaism. And what they wanted to impose was the more enlightened and, you know, Greek polytheism to worship of the Greek gods.

[11:34] And the Jews, Jewish people, were having none of it. And in what is known as the Maccabean Revolt, named after the sort of figurehead Judas Maccabeus, a Jewish group called the Hasidim, how do you pronounce it, allied with Judas Maccabeus, and they defeated the Greeks.

However, after some time, the Hasidim became disillusioned with the corruption of the political and religious system set up by the Maccabeans.

I'm looking at it here the way it looks like Maccabean. It could be a good name for a Scottish coffee shop. But if you can't see the thing, it doesn't, I was going to put it up but no, anyway. So, those who objected formed a grouping which in Hebrew is Hasidim which means separate ones of which the Greek form is the word Pharisaos or Pharisees.

So, these Pharisees are these modern day ones at the time of Jesus. It's sort of 200 years on from the revolt. They were unhappy with the corruption. They'd set themselves up and these Pharisees, they're kind of lay professionals if you like.

They're a combination of sort of businessmen, politicians, and theologians all in one. They're super strict, super into pure Jewish faith and the teachers of law have come up with them are their sidekicks, big fans of the Pharisees.

[12:59] They're experts as it says, you know, the name implies in the Jewish law. They're sort of lawyers and theologians combined. So, these Pharisees, they live very strict, very pious lives, big on living ceremonially clean, undefiled, spiritually undefiled lives which they felt made them acceptable to God and got them into heaven.

It's all about, you know, what do I need to do to get to heaven? And they had lots of things to do. And of course, the Pharisees, you know, if you remember, if you were brought up in church and all the little picture books of the Pharisees, they looked the part.

They had a particular dress code. They sounded the part. They knew a lot. They knew their Bibles. They'd memorized the first five books of the Bible. There's a memory verse challenge for you for this week. Memorize the first five books of the Bible.

Their years of training, they trained others. They were big influencers in the time. You know, I'm not instant influencers. Yo, just going down to the temple or none of that kind of stuff. No, they had a massive, thank you, they had a massive influence on the people in terms of, but unfortunately, they were influencing them away from God and not towards him.

And Jesus, the big problem with that is we'll see. They prayed the part. You'd see them in the temple. Jesus tells us about that. Prayed in the temple. They played the part, fasting regularly, good proportion of their income to the temple work.

[14:23] They pedigreed the part, long Jewish descent and so on. You'd think, if anyone was bound for heaven, it was these guys and these people because they were doing lots of stuff that appeared to be the sorts of stuff that God wanted you to do to get to heaven.

And of course, the apostle Paul was himself formerly a Pharisee, wasn't he? He described himself amongst other things as zealous. And that is what we will see they are here, isn't it?

That's what we're seeing here, isn't it? They're zealous. There's a bunch of them made this three-day journey from Jerusalem to ask this question. And they've been working, beaver away, maybe down in Farsi HQ, down in Jerusalem, trying to think about what kind of question can we get for Jesus that will put him on the ropes, that will discredit him, that ultimately will destroy him and what he has begun.

You can imagine that the chat on those three days on the way up would have been fun, fun, fun, as they kind of try to work these things out. But here's where we begin to get to the nub of the things. They were so zealous not to break the law and the commands of God that what they decided they should do is to add to Scripture hundreds, actually totting up to well over a thousand other what were called oral laws, not the written laws of the Bible, but the oral laws that were passed on by word of mouth known as the oral law or the traditions of the elders.

[15 : 52] They weren't written down, they were just passed on by word, although they did later get written down in a document called the Mishnah and then a commentary called the Talmud was later added to that and those are the foundation documents of modern Judaism.

But the idea, and you know, you can kind of get the logic, the idea was that they wanted to build a fence, if you like, round the law of God so that the law of God was in the middle, big fence round about it, so you couldn't go anywhere near the law of God and near breaking the law of God. So if you kept these things, you were well in the clear, or so they thought, of being condemned, going to Gehenna, the fiery judgment of hell. And so you can, you think, well that's fair enough, sounds like a good idea.

So what they've done, if you like, is pick up one of the slats of the fence of the thousands that they could have picked up, shoved it under their arm, and they walk up to the three-day journey to sort of present it to Jesus and say, well what do you make of this?

And so they present it to Jesus and say, verse one, so your disciples, they don't do the ceremonial washing, as it's on this slide here, before they eat. And the idea was, you know, it's not like COVID to get rid of bacteria or whatever, it's none of that, it's to get rid of actually a kind of spiritual pollution.

[17 : 16] So they, you know, it was a kind of mixed society, there was not just Jewish folks, there was also non-Jewish or Gentiles, and they thought that if they brushed against a Gentile or touched food that a Gentile had touched, then that made them kind of spiritually unclean, defiled, and they needed to go away and wash ceremonially in order to be right with God and not be defiled in their very soul, and we'll see how that works later on.

So, and Jesus' answer to them is interesting, isn't it? Because he answers their question with a question. They want to put him on the back foot, but he's standing perfectly still with all the calm of heaven and answers their question with this question.

And a question not about all the kind of paraphernalia that they wanted to add on, but the thing that's a central concern actually, what does the actual word of God say about it?

Not all the gump that you've added. That's the primary thing, isn't it? And what we're going to see is that Jesus is going to point very clearly that these guys are sincere and sincerely wrong.

so they're following the traditions of the elders. Jesus says, let's have a look about what it means is happening about the breaking of the command of God. Verse 3, Jesus replied, and why do you break the command of God?

[18 : 39] For the sake of your tradition. Jesus, see what he's saying? Basically saying, you guys are Muppets. You know, it's true, it's in the original Greek, kind of. Don't you see what you've done?

This fence that you've built far from being way round the word of God is actually pulls people in to break the word of God that is at the center of the thing.

It's not round the word, it's actually in it and you're causing folks to break it. So that verse 3, why do you break the command of God for the sake of your it's kind of a, it's a bit of a mic drop moment for them.

It should have been a total bombshell in one sentence. He's saying, you guys are sincere but you're sincerely wrong and it's actually much deeper than just a wrong opinion.

You're actually teaching and spreading this stuff. They're teaching stuff that in the end is sending folks to Gehenna to hell rather than to heaven and you're propelling yourselves on the same destination.

[19 : 42] And Jesus goes on to sort of demonstrate and illustrate in what way they're doing that. Verse 5, it says, but you say if anyone declares that you might have, that what might have been

used to help their father or mother is devoted to God that they do not, they do not actually honor their father and mother with it.

Thus you nullify the word of God. So you're saying, oh, this is devoted to God but actually you're nullifying the word of God. It says, honor your father and mother. Thus you nullify the word for the sake of your tradition.

You're hypocrites. You're thinking, how does this work? What's going on here? And I think someone illustrated it this way. I think it's kind of helpful. So imagine your parents are retired and the pension fund kind of runs out of money and so they end up in debt.

The son has property. He rents for money so they could stay in that. They could sell their house, pay off the debt and stay there. But instead, the son decides to dedicate the house that he owns to the Lord.

And so he goes to the temple and he offers it to the Pharisees, the experts in the law. And he says, I want to give you to the Lord.

[21:01] I want to dedicate it so that when I die, it's yours. You can sell it. The money can be used for the temple and so on. But, I like a little clause in there that I can continue to rent it out so that, you know, I'm making money for it.

I'll pay the tithe and so on. And so it's all written up in a legal document. So when the parents come and say, could we stay in your house? They say, no, no, no. No, no, I've dedicated it to the Lord. You can't stay there, you know, and here's the document that states that I can do that. So they nullify the word of God to honor your father and mother by, in this manner, the tradition of the elders.

And Jesus hates that kind of pious nonsense. In fact, he calls it, verse 7, hypocrisy, the hypocrites. The root word for the hypocrites in Greek, you may know it's a mask or an actor.

Actors used masks in ancient plays to play different characters. So the masks hid their true identity as they play these different persona. So Jesus is saying, you are ultimately one thing on the outside, you're pious, you're playing the part, but you're actually another thing inside.

[22:19] And Jesus, you know, does not hold back his punches when it comes back to the Pharisees. In Matthew 23, later on, describes them, you know, you're all whitewashed on the outside, you're looking pretty good, but actually on the inside, you're rotting corpses.

It's pretty vivid. And part of the problem for the Pharisees was that it was about performance. It was about the outward stuff and the emphasis was on that.

And therefore, all these thousands of outward things that you could do that they thought would make you right with God. And that might seem obscure to us, but actually John Calvin observed that that performance mindset, how do I earn my way to heaven, is actually the default position of every human heart.

And actually, where we can, even though we're, as believers, we're trusting in grace, we can end up in that performance mindset. And as we enter into that performance mindset, actually what accompanies it is a kind of comparative way of thinking.

Because in order to kind of assess where you're at on this kind of performance scale, if you like, before God, what you tend to do is kind of look at others to see, make sure that there are folks below you that you are doing better than them.

[23:35] And the sort of corollary to that is a judgmental spirit of being critical. Because you need to feel that you are further up the ladder than them.

Actually, I think that will feed into an already insecure spirit. I mean, we're all insecure, but it feeds an insecure spirit. because we then become very sensitive to anyone saying anything.

Maybe that's a sort of constructive criticism or whatever, whether it's in a workplace or in our family. We're going to snap back or be defensive because that perceived criticism undermines the personal oral tradition that we have created in our own minds that makes us feel the things that are getting us acceptable to God.

That what we end up doing is putting ourselves in the dock every day, wondering to find a favorable verdict from God. Have I done enough to be declared right with God?

Not guilty? And Satan then can have a field day with us as he piles on the condemnation on us that we already have. Do you recognize that in your own spirit sometimes?

[24:46] And actually, we can end up doing the right things for the wrong reasons, whether it's praying or reading the scriptures, giving, serving the church or ministry or in our workplace or

whatever, thinking that these are the things, if we do these things, that because we've done them somehow, we're more acceptable to God, which makes us right with God.

And we're missing out on the true joy of the gospel, of Christ in us and us in Christ and all that that means. You know, there's a constant kind of debate on this, Jesus trying to correct folks on this kind of thinking all through the gospels, actually all through the scriptures.

An example of that is in John's gospel. The crowds, again, are listening to Jesus and somebody comes and asks, what must we do to do the works that God requires?

You know, the Pharisees have given us a thousand things plus all the things in the Bible. and Jesus answered, and listen to this carefully, the work of God is this, here it is, to believe in the one he has sent.

That's it. Cool stop. Done. The work of God is this, the Pharisees have a thousand plus things for you to do. the truth is, this is the one thing that you need to do.

[26 : 20] To believe in the one, the ascent. The one thing that changes everything that starts a God thing in your hearts.

And that is good news, isn't it, friends? That is good news. That's what brings us back to Sunday by Sunday. That's what draws us to the word of God, to hear that beautiful truth spoken into our souls, to deliver us out of the dock that we put ourselves in, out of that performance and comparative mindset, into the freedom of the gospel for which Christ has set us free.

Jesus then contrasts what a performance-based faith looks like that tries to work from the outside in.

So he starts off with the outside in principle but then takes them to the true principle which is actually God works from the inside out. That's how the gospel works.

So let's start with the outside in principle. Starting from works, thinking it will make us acceptable to God. And Jesus, again, doesn't mince his words straight to Isaiah.

[27 : 37] Nothing new under the sun. It's happened before. It'll happen again. Verse 8. God's speaking to his own people through Isaiah. So it's these people and maybe he's in the temple court and maybe there's a great crowd.

Maybe it's a great assembly. It's a Passover or one of the great feasts that's going on and there's fervent praise and so on. And here's God's assessment of it all.

These people honour me with their lips on the outside. Praise. Spiritual reality on the inside. The truth is, he says, but their hearts are far from me.

Spiritually dead. Rotten inside. And then, you know, Hebrew parallelism. Isaiah just kind of, the next verse says the same thing but amplifies it.

Verse 9. They worship me, this great assembly, all in vain. It's useless because their teachings are merely human rules.

[28 : 37] They're human rules, not God's rules. They are therefore God-less. So Jesus wants to keep drawing them back to the words that gives life.

What does the words say about this tradition and pointing them to Isaiah? Lit service, going through the motions and so on. Justifying an inner, fragile sense of self, insecurities, through their works.

So in the end, it's misery but also it's futile. Missing out on the wonderful grace of God. Service, any service given, becomes fundamentally, whether it's worship or whatever, becomes fundamentally self-serving, not God and others serving, lead to burnout, resentment, bitter spirit much quicker.

So in verse 10, he calls the Christ and he says, listen and understand. The good news of God is not that it's outside in.

It's a workspace thing. It has you in the dock every day. Because he says, what goes into someone's mouth does not defile them. What comes from the outside in doesn't make you, doesn't defile you.

[29 : 57] But what comes out of your mouth, the inside out principle, that's what defiles you because that's where the root of the problem is. And what comes out, Jesus is saying, is indicative of what is already in there.

We saw that in Matthew 12, 34. The mouth speaks what the heart is full of. And the heart in the Bible is not kind of the emotional center like we think of it today.

It's the control center of your life. The emotions in those days were in your bowels. But the heart's the control center of will and mind and feelings and choice and so on.

Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be also, says Jesus. And of course, yes, you know your Old Testament. There was stuff about touching dead bodies and having infections and mold in your tent and so on that had ceremonial requirements.

But actually, if you look really, really close to you, you will see nothing, nothing, that requires ceremonial washing of hands every day for every meal to somehow rid you of that kind of defilement.

[31:07] Jesus is saying, it's not an outside-in way of religion, of faith. Actually, it's much better than that. God starts a work in your heart as you trust in the one thing, the one who was to come, that starts the God thing, that changes everything in your heart.

It's the opposite way around. He works out what he's already worked in, the scriptures tell us. It's an inside-out principle. And what Jesus speaks, nothing to do with the traditions of men, but the freeing and liberating word of God as he points them to the Ten Commandments, which is already unpacked in Matthew chapters 5 to 17 on the Sermon on the Mount.

Verse 19, he says, think about this, for out of the heart, that's where evil thoughts, murder, which he linked to anger in Matthew 5, adultery, which he links to lust, they're also sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander, lies and deceit, they're all parts of the commandments.

Those are the things that just destroy, that are there lurking in the heart, come out of the mouth and bring destruction. And in doing so, as we have that kind of principle of misunderstanding that, we're missing out on trusting in the one who is to come, who is the one thing that is needed, who changes everything and starts a God thing in our lives.

Leads us away from masks and hypocrisy, from acting, bluffing, trying to cover what is the reality in our hearts, thinking that we can get through by our works and what people see.

[33:00] but a heart, a heart that is filled with Christ, that is filled with the Spirit. Well, a heart that is tender to God, a heart that is going to come and have short accounts with Christ.

Well, that's one that is going to know that life-changing, life-transforming work and freeing work that Christ came to bring. Where there is, you know, what's so important, I think, when we're praying to bring true confession to God, but also to make sure there's a bit of accountability with trusted friends so that our hearts remain tender to Him and that one thing that we're trusting in that brings, that changes everything, that starts that God thing, it gets to continue to work in our lives.

But Jesus says, you know, think about the heart and the importance of the heart. Verse 20, these things that lurk inwardly are what defile you.

Nothing to do with hand-washing and all that nonsense. It's what's going on here. And again, I guess, Jesus causes us to stop and to pause and think, you know, what's coming out of our mouths in our workplace, in our homes, with our friends, on WhatsApp or text, on Facebook or socials. What we're saying is indicative of the state of our hearts before the Lord. Now, that's all heavy stuff, isn't it? But necessary.

[34:35] But Jesus raises it not just to kind of hammer the Pharisees, but actually to give them the opportunity to see the truth and experience the truth that sets free and as he speaks it's to us to enable us to enjoy the Lord and the gospel that frees us, that lifts us, that resets us, restores us to our right minds, brings the spirit of God rushing into our lives as we open wide the doors of our hearts and continue to invite him in.

we enjoy the gospel air that we now breathe because we're in Christ. The old has gone and the new has come and we welcome it.

So Jesus is not apologetic for speaking life-giving truth, the way of this new exodus in which he is leading. I think verse 12 is hilarious.

The disciples come up to him and said, I don't know if you realized but the Pharisees were really offended by what you just heard and said. And Jesus replies and surely with a note of sadness in his voice.

Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them. They're blind guides. The blind lead the blind. And both will fall into a pit.

[36:00] So here there's no quarter for hypocrisy, for false religion, for outward conformity with an inward lack of reality, for adding to or subtracting from the word of God where they are leading people into sin and into disobedience.

Where they are leading people thinking they are pleasing God but actually offending him. Now Jesus is not so bothered that they are offended but that God is offended.

And so he challenges their performance mentality. And of course these verses, these words, they're judgment language that Jesus uses elsewhere.

In other words he's saying these guys their teaching is not of me. They are the tears and the wheat that we looked at a few weeks ago. They're spiritually blind. They're in the dark. And as they're doing, fumbling around they're leading others in spiritual blindness into the pit.

Why does Jesus use such strong language? It can make folks feel uncomfortable at times but Jesus is using strong language because he's serious about the things that he's saying.

[37 : 13] He's zealous for the glory of his Father, for what is true, what is beautiful, for what is right, for what is light and love and truth and hope that these people are destroying and worse than that they're leading others astray and he cannot and he will not have that.

And as he speaks he speaks with all the love of heaven with all the power of God and with the presence of the Spirit that those who hear before him their hearts might be rendered that they would turn, they would bow the knee turning from the way in which they're leading folks to the pit and following the new exodus.

It's a kind of tragic scene that they don't do that but where's the hope? Well the hope here is the big picture that Jesus is the one who is to come that there is one thing that we are to do that changes everything that brings this God thing into our hearts.

He is the one thing actually that can make them clean right with God forever. And we see that actually illustrated at the end of chapter 14 verse 33.

You know the kind of response of the Pharisees should have been like the response of the disciples in the boat where they worshipped him and declared truly you are the son of God trusting in the one who was to come who stood before them who came with power.

[38 : 47] 14 verse 35 to heal and who comes as we'll discover with that same power that can cleanse and make us right with God so that by trusting in him by faith we are cleansed we're made right with God not by what we do but what he has done for us on the cross because no rule no regulation can declare us clean make us right with God but the scriptures declare loud and proudly there is one who can declare us clean and as he declares us clean we are clean because he is the one who died on the cross and shed his blood for us that washes us and cleanses us making us whiter than snow before the Lord well how does that happen maybe you're thinking that is amazing I've never heard that before wait not all the

Pharisees were like the guys in this chapter when they come to Jesus there was one guy he was a Pharisee John tells us in his gospel his name was Nicodemus and he came at night to ask Jesus how do I get clean how do I get the kingdom how do I get this life of God in my heart and Jesus says you know you're Israel's teacher how come you don't know these things let me tell you you need to be born again or born in you in your heart what does he mean Paul tells us that our heart without the spirit without God our hearts are dead our hearts are dead to God we just don't there's no sense of understanding of who he is or relationship with him and Ezekiel prophesied that when the one came he would bring this wonderful work of God's he would come and he would change those hearts in terms of relationship with

God like stone who would bring the one thing that was needed that changes everything that starts this God thing well to them their hearts would be changed become new like from stone to flesh beating in accord with the heartbeat of God he would send his spirit to give that new heart so that it was like it was born anew you know when I was born again born in Easter 1989 it's a long time ago when for the first time I trusted in the one who the scriptures told us was to come trusting that he was the one thing that was needed that brought that changed everything for me and started that God thing in my heart

I was filled as I bowed the knee to Jesus both as my savior the forgiver of my sin and lord over my life I was filled with a sense of the love of God from head to toe and that control center of my life was transformed and was being transformed and made you perfect but it changed new creation the old is gone and the new had come my friends didn't know what happened to me I remember one! saying you used to be in all this stuff that we were doing and there was happened and I just tell him that's amazing the direction of my life was changed my conscience my emotions my identity my sense of meaning and purpose all transformed and renewed!

[42 : 41] changed and changed and changing but even before the spirit of God at that moment the spirit of God was drawing me and I began to lose desire for the things that were really important to me I mean I have to embarrass to confess I swore a lot like a lot a lot and all the other things that

young guys get up to that you know I was in and about all that kind of stuff I actually didn't know I don't want to swear anymore it doesn't do anything you know the spirit of God I didn't know it was contending for my heart and my soul for drawing me to the cross and to the foot of the cross where I bowed the knee received

I was cleansed by the blood of the lamb poured out on Calvary and received them as Lord and was filled with the spirit new heart a new song in my mouth a spirit of praise to our God as the psalmist puts it now maybe you've come this morning and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian but you know that you're meant to be here this morning for whatever reason you know that the spirit of God has been working on your soul and you're thinking well maybe today maybe you know that today is the day to bow the knee receive Jesus as the savior as the one thing that you need that will change everything and start this God thing receive him as savior and as Lord that you might know the Holy Spirit coming into your life and changing that heart that is kind of dead to God make it alive you see the secret to all that historical stuff and change that I was talking about at the beginning was just this that Jesus knew the heart of the human problem actually is the problem of the human heart well worn phrase and actually what was happening was that people were being changed just one heart at a time and as their hearts were changed they were drawn to meet with others who were experiencing the same thing into gospel communities and they began to share that change like I did with my pals like what has happened to you it's amazing let me tell you and they also were changed neighbors colleagues family silently a silent revolution God was changing things one heart at a time and he is inviting you and I to be part of that this morning maybe you're a believer and your heart has drifted lost sight of the beautiful truth that the heart of the glory of

God that you just need to stop doing all this stuff for all the wrong reasons thinking he doesn't love me if I do this he'll love me there's one thing that is needed one thing to believe on the one who was sent and as we have done that it changes everything so come as we gather at the foot of the cross rejoice in the beauty and the simplicity and the power of the salvation that we're receiving that is offered to you and remember and give thanks come to the foot of the cross maybe you need to repent of using this stuff to make you think that God would love you more when we come to Christ God loves us more than we can ever grasp or imagine and he can't love us anymore by anything that we do because it's all established for us in

Christ hold on to these things afresh rejoice in and let it restore your hearts and your soul as we gather around the table!