Matthew 15:1-20

9-11-16

When Cleanliness is next to Godliness

I. Slide1 Announce:
   A. Slide2-5 THRIVE. Children @ Risk - R&R. Crafters. REAL.
   C. Slide7-10 Read Notes:

II. Slide11 Intro:
   A. Slide12 What do these phrases have in common? Moderation in all things (Aristotle, Doctrine of the Mean). To thine ownself be true (Hamlet). God helps those who help themselves (Aesop's Fable, Hercules & the Wagoneer). The lion shall lay down with the lamb (Is.65:25). Cleanliness is next to Godliness (John Wesley, quoted in 1 of his sermons, already in existence) People often think they are found in Scripture
   1. They are not. And actually I think we have here in our text today a case that shows the opposite to be true for this last phrase. So, I chose for my Title: Slide13 Cleanliness is next to Godlessness.
   B. Slide14 Once when I was in Sophia, Bulgaria I found a wonderful deal on an antique pocket watch. It looked old/rustic/cool…buuut, it only ran for a few days…if that!
      1. No matter how often I wound it or how many times I changed the hands…it just didn’t help. [it did have correct time twice a day!]
      2. The most important thing about a watch is to tell time. So, what I learned that day, when it comes to watches…Slide15 what’s most important is…what’s inside!
         a) This morning, Jesus challenges the religious leaders with what’s most important. Inside or outside? Mouth or heart? Washing hands or washing hearts?
   C. Outline: The Delegation; The Degradation; The Defilement.

III. Slide16 THE DELEGATION (1,2) Pharisees & Scribes from Jerusalem
   A. A delegation of religious leaders from Jerusalem travel about 100 mi to check Jesus out.
      1. Jesus ministry is front page news and has reached all the way down to Jer.
      2. These men didn’t come to see if Jesus was the Messiah…but instead to find a fly in the ointment…& to this end…they were masters.
a) **Slide17a** They could be straining their water & find the smallest gnat, but somehow miss the camel.

b) They were majoring on minors... _straining out a gnat_, while minoring on majors... _swallowing a camel_. And being so busy with small details, they never dealt with the important matters. (Lev.11:4,23 both were forbidden as food)

**B. Slide17b** This was not a matter of personal hygiene but of religious ritual.

1. They ate w/their hands so of course they’d wash up before a meal, but this was dealing with their prescribed ceremonial washing!

**C. (3)** They wash their hands in a special way (Mrk7:3) – literally means _w/the fist_.

(Exact meaning unknown) Some think up to the elbow (Like a doctor, nurse, surgeon scrubs in/up)

1. We should ask ourselves in what ways do we love tradition more than God?
   a) Maybe when we allow politics replace our dependence on God.
   b) Maybe when we place our dependence on our favorite political party leader thinking they will become the way of accomplishing the kingdom here on earth.
   c) Maybe when we believe living good moral lives can become the way to God.
   d) Maybe when we believe worshiping God is about what we do or don’t consume, rather than having love for God in our Hearts.
   e) Maybe when we believe that how much we have accumulated equals how much God loves us. [be careful of humanmade laws]

**D. Slide18a** Traditions of the elders – The Mishna at the end of the 2nd century said, _Tradition is the fence around the Law._

1. I think the Law needed protecting about as much as a lion in a field needs protection around him.

**E.** During the late 2nd century AD, these oral teachings (traditions) were written down in what was called the Mishnah (a book w/6 divisions: agriculture, festivals, marriage, civil life, crime, & ceremonies)

1. To this was added a commentary called the Gemara.
2. Together the Mishnah & the Gemara formed the Talmud.
3. These contained 248 commandments (thou shalt’s) & 365 prohibitions (thou shalt not’s)
4. Slide18b As one Rabbi put it, *The Scriptures are water, the Mishnah is wine*; the *Gemara* spiced wine.

F. The Jewish Mishnah contained no less than 30 ch.’s on *the cleansing of vessels*.

1. This Hand washing ritual came from the command for *priests* to wash their *hands* (Ex.30:19; 40:12). *It was a reminder to come to God clean* (i.e. w/clean hearts).

2. All *pious Jews* started doing this about *200 yrs before* Christ.

3. So, by Jesus day, it was *firmly entrenched as a requirement* for those who wanted to be clean.
   a) They completely lost the original idea of *clean hearts*.

IV. Slide19 **THE DEGRADATION (3-9) When Lips supersede Heart**

A. (3-6) Now Jesus gives an illustration of the point He just made.

1. Jesus will quote from *Isaiah* in vs.8,9, but 1st He’ll pull from *Moses*…
   How can the Pharisees argue with the *Law & Prophets*?

B. (5) But you say…

1. Illustration: You’ve seen many moms place a *very thin blanket* over their babies in their strollers (keep the sun off). But what would happen if they just kept placing *blanket after blanket*. It doesn’t matter how *thin* these blankets are…the baby would *suffocate*.
   a) Over the years the Pharisees had *overlaid* the biblical teaching w/vast amounts of *spoken teaching blankets & oral tradition blankets*.
   b) Though admirable, the original aim of *protecting* the baby, became its *demise*.

C. Slide20 Corban – Mark explains to his Roman audience this *Hebrew word* *a gift to God; devoted to God*.

1. If a son wanted to avoid his responsibility, of caring for his parents in later life, he simply needed to declare his money *Corban*…dedicated to God.

2. So, by observing what *man allowed* they could avoid what *God required*.
   a) *Ps*: Jesus is concerned about us taking care of our parents.

3. And this was just 1 example of *many*, claimed Jesus.

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1 David Hewitt, Mark, pg.106.
D. Note the digression here: 4 layers of thin blankets that smother:

1. **Replacing** (8, heart for lips). **Neglecting** (3,4 God’s commandments). **Rejecting** (6, God’s commandments). **Invalidating** (9, in vain you worship Me).

2. What a **false confidence** man’s traditions have given to so many **sincere** people. **Sincere**, but sincerely wrong.

   a) As if what you do on the **outside**, will somehow change the **inside**.

E. (7) **Hypocrites** – You folks have turned religion into **play-acting**.

1. **We** are **hypocritical** when we talk about **love** but never love; Talk about **forgiving** but never forgive; Talk about **witnessing** but never witness.

F. (8) Honor w/lips, but not heart – Jesus says, **I’ll tell you why** My disciples don’t keep **your traditions** – Look what Isaiah said would happen when tradition takes the place of truth.

1. Slide21 There is a **big difference** between **tradition** & **truth**...

   a) **Tradition** is outward; **Truth** is inward. **Tradition** has to do w/ritual; **Truth** has to do w/reality. **Tradition** is something you keep; **Truth** is something that keeps you.

2. What a tragedy that **religious people** would ignorantly practice their religion & **become worse** for doing it.

   a) Jesus doesn’t say, **well as long as you’re sincere**!

G. (8b) **Heart** is far from me – You can’t **think** your way into the kingdom of God.

1. Slide22 Christianity is a **rational** faith, a **reasonable** faith, but you do not get into the kingdom **head 1st**. You get into the kingdom **heart 1st**.

H. What traditions will we hand down to the next generation, yet consider them **doctrine**?

1. **We** shouldn’t pass on **Non-Essentials**; we must pass on **Jesus**.

V. Slide23 **THE DEFILEMENT** (10-20) **Think Internal not external; Think Potential b4 Actual**

A. The issue? **Outward** religious traditions vs. **Inward** living faith.

   1. Imagine the disciples requesting of Jesus, **Lord, teach us to wash!**

B. **Sin is Internal** before it is **External** (10-18)

C. (11) William Barclay calls this is **the most revolutionary passage in the N.T.**

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2 Jerry Vines, pg.130.
D. Sin is **Potential** before it is **Actual** (19,20)

E. Here Jesus gives us a catalogue of 13 ugly sins. It is an X-ray of the human heart.
   1. All of these sins lurk as a **potential** inside of all of us.
   2. So Jesus calls for **purity/holiness** on the inside from a changed **heart** from God

F. Slide24 In the forests of northern Europe & Asia lives little animal called the **ermine**, known for his **snow-white fur** in winter. *He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it.* Fur hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don’t set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with **grime**. Then the hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home but doesn’t enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his **purity**. *For the ermine, purity is more precious than life.*

G. **Slide25a** Some, like the Pharisees of old, have a very **defective theology** of man & sin and think that man is intrinsically/inherently **good**???
   1. And because of this they treated **symptoms** w/their **legalism**, rather than dealing w/the **root problem**!
   2. **Slide25b** Yes the bible deals with the **fruit** of sin; but better…it deals w/the **root** of sin. It doesn’t only deal w/the **flow** of sin; but the very **fountain** of sin.
   3. **Slide25c** *We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners!*

H. Spurgeon, 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**.
   1. You might think, *My wife makes me so angry!* – But no, anger was already there in your heart & this just gave it opportunity to come out.

I. So, what’s the remedy?

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3 Our Daily Bread, April 21, 1997
1. It’s not education, culture change, social reform, nor revolution, but regeneration.

2. The heart can be purified only by faith.

J. Slide26a Wrap up: Your choice: Keep polishing your broken watch; or receive a new mainspring, from The Watch-Maker, for your heart today.

1. Slide26b Ezek.36:26 I will give you a new heart & put a new spirit within you.

2. Slide26c Any gospel which says only what you must do & never announce what Christ has done...is no gospel at all!

   a) We believe with the heart, love from the heart, sing from the heart, obey from the heart, give from the heart, and pray from the heart. www

3. We must constantly remind ourselves that true religion comes from this new heart.