

Inside Out, Not Outside In

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[0 : 00] We're in Matthew 15, 1 to 20. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, You are seeking worshipers who worship you in spirit and truth.

Lord, followers who love you with their whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. And that's what we long to be. Lord, we don't want to be fakers who paid lip service to you. Lord, we want to worship you and obey you from the heart. So to that end, Lord, speak to us from your word.

Teach us your will. Fill us with the glorious vision of Christ, your Son, and His grace toward us.

[1 : 20] And as we behold Him, fill us more and more with your Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you are able, please stand so that we can honor God as we read from His word, Matthew chapter 15, verses 1 to 20. Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?

For they do not wash their hands when they eat. He answered them, And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?

For God commanded, Honor your father and your mother, and whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. But you say, If anyone tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God.

He need not honor his father. So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[2 : 38] In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the people to him and said to them, Hear and understand.

It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth. This defiles a person. Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?

He answered, Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone. They are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

But Peter said to him, Explain the parable to us. And he said, Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart. And this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

[3 : 51] These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

Please be seated. We were cooking in our home recently using daikon radish. And as I was cutting them up, I noticed that one of the radishes had a soft, spongy texture.

And I'm pretty frugal. I don't like to throw food away. But as much as it pained me, I had to throw most of that away. And this is a common issue with root vegetables. You leave root vegetables in the ground for too long.

And rather than harvesting it at the proper time, it loses its firm, juicy, and crisp texture. And it becomes soft and spongy. But it's hard to pick these bad radishes out at the grocery store because they look perfectly healthy and delicious on the outside.

You only notice this problem when you cut it open and see the inside. This is a common issue when you shop at grocery stores with other items as well because the stores do their very best to make

sure that all their items look ripe and healthy and fresh.

[5 : 13] They wax some of their fruits to delay moisture loss and then to add shine to them to make them look fresher and riper. They mist their leafy greens constantly so that they can look glossy and hydrated and so to mask any wilting that might already be there.

They use warm strategic lighting over their meat to enhance their color and make them look fresher as you're shopping. They're all made to look good on the outside.

But the moment of truth comes when you start to cook. Outward beauty is much more easily attained than inward integrity. Jesus teaches us in this passage that people are like this often also. It's easier to groom our appearances, to curate our social media accounts and the way we present ourselves to others, to put on a smiling face and to behave respectably on the outside in such a way that we look good on the outside.

But likewise, it's easier to manage outward appearances than inward transformation. But Jesus reminds us of this truth in 1 Samuel 16, 7, that the Lord sees not as man sees.

[6 : 34] Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. And for this reason, God desires, in this passage we learn, that God desires heart worship, not lip service.

God desires inward obedience rather than outward performance. In verses 1 to 9, we see the outside-in, quote-unquote, obedience of the Pharisees.

And then in verses 10 to 20, we see the inside-out obedience that Jesus seeks. This is the last substantial account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, in the Gospel of Matthew.

After this, he will start moving on to foreign parts outside of Galilee, and then he will start heading toward the cross, toward Jerusalem. Fittingly, we begin to see an escalation in the hostilities of the Jewish authorities against Jesus in this passage.

It says in verses 1 to 2, then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat. These are not local Jewish rabbis.

[7 : 41] They're not local teachers of the law. These are a delegation from Jerusalem, the Jewish capital. They have come for a formal inquiry into this famed street preacher and miracle worker and to them, as it seems to them, an unorthodox rabbi called Jesus.

This is an inquisition. We get a sense of the tone of their questioning from verse 2. Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?

For they do not wash their hands when they eat. The concern here is not with personal hygiene. It's with ritual purity. Washing oneself before meals is described a few times in the Old Testament.

But importantly, it is never prescribed as a command to be observed by everyone. The only context where hand washing was required before meals was for the priests in the temple of God.

If they had contracted any kind of ritual unclean, the priests were required to wash their entire selves in water before they could partake in the sacrificial food. So the Old Testament law nowhere requires ordinary people to wash their hands before eating for the sake of ritual purity.

[9 : 00] But subsequent accumulation of Jewish scribal law reasoned that since Israel as a nation is a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, as God says in Exodus 19, verse 6, therefore they reasoned that the whole nation should keep this priestly requirement of hand washing.

God had warned in Deuteronomy 4.2, you shall not add to the word I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

But these Pharisees and scribes have added to God's law. They tied up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them up on the people's shoulders.

This is the tradition of the elders that they are speaking of. Jesus knows this, so he responds sharply and proportionally in verse 3. And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?

Notice how Jesus turns this around and contrasts the commandment of God from your tradition.

The Pharisees and the scribes accused Jesus' disciples, and by implication Jesus, of breaking the tradition of the elders.

[10 : 11] But Jesus goes one step further and in his response tells them, that should be the least of your worries, breaking the tradition of the elders. You're concerned about my disciples breaking the tradition of the elders?

They are nothing but man-made traditions. You yourselves are breaking the very commandments of God. How so? Jesus goes on to give concrete examples of this.

In verses 4 to 6, he says, For God commanded, Honor your father and your mother, and whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. But you say, If anyone tells his father or his mother, what you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honor his father.

So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. Once again, Jesus draws a contrast between what God commanded and what you say. The two quotations that Jesus cites here are from the Old Testament law.

The first is the fifth of the Ten Commandments, Honor your father and mother, which literally God spoke out of Mount Sinai in Exodus 20, verse 12.

[11:17] The second quotation is an explanation and an elaboration of that commandment, the fifth commandment, in Exodus 21, 17, which says, Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.

Jesus contends here that the Pharisees and the scribes are breaking the commandments of God by saying, If anyone tells his father or mother, What you would have gained from me, what you think I owe you as your child, is given to God.

That's the practice called korban. In Mark 7, 11, this is explicitly stated. Korban is a sacred gift dedicated to God. And if a Pharisee or a scribe makes something, declares something korban and takes a vow in declaring that, then any food or money or property, anything that belonged to them that they have vowed to God, now become untouchable by anyone and not even by their parents. In this culture, in this day and age, parents could reasonably expect to be financially supported by their sons. In those days, children were the parents' retirement plans.

However, an unfilial and stingy son could declare all his money korban and thereby maintain possession of it for the time being until he could decide on some quote-unquote sacred or more self-serving purpose putting some money into the temple treasury to enlarge their reputation, for example.

[12:50] It gives them, it buys them time to dispose of it as they wish rather than having to use it to support their parents. Saying, well, can you give me some allowance, some living expenses?

And then they say, whoops, sorry, I dedicated all of that a long time ago to God. And you know, as the scriptures say, you can't go back on your word. Any vow you make to the Lord, you must keep it.

So, sorry, it looks like I will not be able to support you. You're on your own. If that seems harsh and heartless, we don't need to look far for similar examples in our culture and society.

How many children have pocketed their parents' social security checks? How many children have prematurely claimed the power of attorney over their parents declaring their parents infirm and incompetent to manage their own finances and then using that power to dispose of all their wealth in selfish ways?

These things are not uncommon. And Jesus rightly and roundly rebukes these Pharisees and scribes for this practice of using their piety as a pretext for withholding provisions from their parents and thereby failing to honor them, which is a commandment of God.

[14:09] For the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. These teachers of God's law were themselves breaking God's law by their own casuistry.

They worshipped God but in vain because they were teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. This raises the question for us, how many times have we added our own traditions to the doctrines of God and preached our traditions as the commandments of God?

If you don't dress like me or talk like me, then you're not a good Christian. If you don't homeschool your children, then you must not be serious about being a disciple of Christ.

If you don't vote for the same political candidates that I do, then you can't be a real Christian. But we must be careful not to administer litmus tests on matters where God's word is silent.

Let us be controlled by the fear of God and carefully distinguish the commandment of God from our own suggestions, however wise they might seem. And let us also be careful on the flip side not to subtract anything from God's word because this is a common temptation too, isn't it?

[15:24] Downplaying parts of scripture that offend our sensibilities and temperaments, ignoring parts of scripture that contradict the dominant ethos of our culture and of our time, explaining away and nullifying clear commands of scripture, these are also ways that we make void the word of God to uphold our own traditions.

When the traditions of man are at odds with the commandments of God, let us be a people who always stand on the side of the commandments of God. Jesus continues his stinging rebuke in verses 7 and 9, you hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, these people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. The word hypocrite is originally a Greek word that means an actor or a pretender.

Pharisees are pretenders because they act like they care deeply about honoring God and obeying his commands when they actually don't care that much about those things.

Rather, they care deeply about being seen and thought of by men as honoring God and obeying his commands. But our God desires heart worship rather than lip service.

[16:43] He desires inward obedience rather than outward performance. So Jesus cites the prophecy of Isaiah 29 verse 13 which is a lament concerning unfaithful city of David, Jerusalem.

Since this delegation from Jerusalem are the representative leaders of Israel at the time, it is fitting to apply this 8th century BC prophecy to them. What Isaiah prophesied then and was true of Israel then is still true in Jesus' day.

This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me. There are some in our day as well of Christians who are Christians in name only. People who are Christians only when people are looking.

They attend church services and know all the Christian jargon and they know when to say their amens and hallelujahs but in their private lives, their hearts are far from God. The love of God does not burn within their hearts.

They can talk eloquently about God in the third person but they never talk to God personally. They don't spend time reading God's word and praying. There is no praise of God or thanksgiving to God that swells up from their hearts.

[17:55] There are people who volunteer and serve on the church committee or boards not out of humility and love but because they like the spotlight or the authority and power that come from the position.

Their piety is a pretext for prestige. This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me. But God desires no such mask wearing or play acting.

However weak and frail and sinful and faulty we might be. God would rather be that we be followers who are true and earnest.

God desires heart worship rather than lip service. This contrast between the heart and the lip then paves the way for Jesus' teaching on true inside out obedience in verses 10 to 20.

He says in verse 10 that Jesus called the people to him and said to them hear and understand.

Notice that Jesus is no longer debating with the Pharisees and the scribes.

[19:04] He has turned his attention away from the Pharisees and scribes and he is calling the people to himself and he is now teaching them and he is calling the Pharisees and scribes are still within earshot they are hearing what Jesus is saying but now he is making a public pronouncement that summarizes his teaching on this matter but before he does that he says hear and understand if you are here for our sermons these last couple months you may remember that those were key words that were repeated over and over again in chapter 13 hear and understand that's where Jesus tells several parables of the kingdom Jesus said in Matthew 13 13 to 14 this is why I speak to them in parables because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand indeed in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says you will indeed hear but never understand and you will indeed see but never perceive for this people's heart has grown dull and with their ears they can barely hear and their eyes they have closed lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them and then he tells the famous parable of the sower where Jesus contrasts the seeds that are planted but never bear fruit from the seed that that's planted that bears much fruit and the difference is that the seed that fails to bear fruit are those who hear the word but do not understand it whereas the seeds that do bear fruit represent those who hear the word and understand it so the parable of the sower as well as the parable of the wheat and the weeds are being reenacted in this live scene in chapter 15 that's why in verse 15

Peter asks Jesus explain the parable to us in verse 13 then Jesus compares these fruitless these Pharisees to fruitless plants that God has not planted their weeds and therefore they will be uprooted hear and understand Jesus says he's inviting us to pay close attention because what we

make of this principle in verse 11 will decide our eternal destiny whether we are wheat planted by God and bear fruit or weeds planted by the devil that will be rooted up on judgment day and that all important parable is is this it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person but what comes out of the mouth that defiles a person the Pharisees and the scribes do not understand this parable this principle instead they're offended by it the disciples say to Jesus in verse 21 do you know that the

Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying yet Jesus does nothing to appease them or to persuade them instead he says in verse 13 that they are plants that the father has not planted therefore they will be rooted up leave them alone they are like blind guides and if the blind lead the blind both will fall into the pit imagine a blind person that you see on the street trying to cross the road and they're being led by a guide dog but then it turns out the guide dog is also blind it's a senseless folly they will both get hit by a car or they'll both fall into a pit it's better Jesus says to leave the blind guides alone let them go their own way these Pharisees are blind because as Jesus says in John 9 41 they insist that they see if they were humble enough to admit that they are blind then they would start following Jesus and in doing so they gain sight but because they insist that they Jesus his own disciples have a hard time understanding that's why

Peter as the leader and the representative of the twelve asks Jesus in verse 15 explain the parable to us and Jesus says are you also still without understanding but nonetheless Jesus goes on patiently to explain the parable to them why because to them to the disciples it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven but to them once again this principle of verse 11 is drawing a clear line of demarcation between the Pharisees and scribes and Jesus disciples between the sons of the evil one and the sons of the kingdom of God those who belong to God will hear and understand this truth those who do not belong to God will take offense at this truth but what does it mean Jesus unpacks this in verses 17 20 do not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled but what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and this defiles a person for out of the heart come evil thoughts murder adultery sexual immorality theft false witness slander these are what defile a person but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone

Jesus point is simple but profound the food that we eat whether it's eaten with unwashed hands or not is merely a natural biological process that has no bearing on the person's moral or spiritual cleanness it's not what comes into the person's outside in the outward!

[24 : 38] things but rather what comes from the inside out the inward things that come out of the heart that's what truly defiles us the heart in biblical conception is not merely the seed of our emotions the way we talk about it in English but it is the seed of our thoughts and intentions it is the very center of the inner person that's why Proverbs 4 23 enjoins us keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs!

of life our lives all have a certain! or a! flow that directs our decisions and actions and the source of that God says is the heart what's in the heart directs that course and isn't this true we know this from our experience out of the heart come evil thoughts don't they in verse 19 Jesus lists the sins that are forbidden in the second half of the ten commandments the fifth commandment honor your father and mother was already mentioned earlier now Jesus lists commandments six seven eight and nine you shall not murder you shall not commit adultery you shall not steal and you shall not bear false testimony against your neighbor there are two additional sins!

And in the original Greek of this all the sins here are listed in the plural form so the Christian standard Bible renders the verse this way for from the heart come evil thoughts murders adulteries sexual immoralities deaths false testimonies slander they are listed in that plural form to emphasize the fact that the plurality of sins all kinds of murders and adulteries etc they all stem from the evil thoughts that proceed from the heart does not our own experience bear this out Jesus said in Matthew 5 22 that we violate the sixth commandment you shall not murder even if we are only angry with someone or insult them why is it so because the attitude of the heart determines the action of our hands because murder comes from anger and bitterness and hatred in our hearts because murder is precipitated by belittling and dehumanizing insults toward others it's not the outward circumstances that are responsible for murders but the inward attitude you can take everyone's guns away and that might mitigate the problem some but it will never eradicate! murder people will still find other ways to kill each other why because murder comes from the evil thoughts of the heart this makes obedience to Jesus command to God's command much harder not

murdering someone is relatively speaking easy we've all hopefully succeeded in that if we have even a modicum of self control and fear of the law and the fear of the government you can avoid that steer clear of murder but being sinfully angry constituting murder of the heart that's hard isn't it our hearts can be so unruly at times similarly Jesus said in Matthew 5 28 that not only a man who commits physical adultery but anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart and has violated the seventh commandment why is this so because adultery comes from the lusts and fantasies of the heart it's not the outward circumstances that cause defilement but the thoughts you can ban and disable all brothels and websites that facilitate adultery you can ban all porn from the web and people will still find a way to indulge their lustful fantasies because adultery comes from the heart you can ban all sexually suggestive advertisements and shows you can force everyone to cover themselves make all women wear full length dresses and hijabs and still there will be adulteries and all kinds of sexual immoralities because sexual immorality comes from the heart once again this makes obedience much harder it's easy to pay lip service to obedience oh

I've never cheated on my wife I'm faithful but have you ever lusted after another have you ever entertained those fantasies in your heart even if we were to eliminate poverty from the world and make everyone in the world well off there will still be thefts in this world why because there will still be envy that compares oneself to others because there will still be pride that wants to have more than the other person next to you because thefts ultimately come from envy and covetousness of the heart for the same reason there will always be people who bear false witness against their neighbors and slander their neighbors because that sin comes from the hatred and envy and selfishness of the heart outward performance is easy compared to inward obedience if true holiness that

[30 : 41] God demands must come from the heart if it's a matter of the heart then who can be saved who then can be clean the Pharisees and the scribes took offense at this idea not only because it meant that they were failing you're not as good at keeping the lawn as you thought you were but also because this principle that Jesus articulated upended the entire pharisaic ideology and theology of ritual purity when you understand its implications the implications of what Jesus is saying here the principle is really radical and revolutionary here's why the hand washing was just one small aspect of Jewish ritual purity if you read through the book of Leviticus which I happened to be doing just two weeks ago there's all kinds of laws about ceremonial cleanness and defilement you can be ceremonially made unclean by eating or drinking unclean food you can become unclean by having discharges of bodily fluids you can contract uncleanness through skin diseases by coming into contact unclean things or unclean people all these laws of literal cleanness served an important purpose in the

Old Testament and God explains the logic of clean and unclean foods in Leviticus 20 verses 24 to 26!

holy set holy set apart people a separate people belonging to God unlike these other nations these were the laws that served to separate Jews from Gentiles these laws served to mark the chosen people of God for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples that you should be mine so then even though the Pharisees and the scribes did ask a peripheral kind of nitpicky question why aren't they washing their hands before they eat Jesus' pronouncement here has far reaching implications and strikes at the very heart of Jewish identity this is what set them apart in fact if you pay attention to the gospels as you read this dynamic of clean and unclean throughout the gospel of Matthew you notice that this issue has been following

Jesus wherever he has been ministering to people in chapter 8 right Jesus heals a leper lepers are ritually unclean any contact with them makes you ritually unclean but the leper comes to Jesus and says Lord if you will you can make me clean and Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying I will be clean and immediately his leprosy was cleansed this would have raised many legal questions in the minds of the Pharisees and the scribes wait what just happened there leper unclean Jesus touched him he should be unclean but in the moment he touched him the leper was cleansed so does he contract uncleanness or not they had never dealt with a situation like that before similarly

Jesus healed the servant of an unclean gentile centurion same chapter he even entered the gentile territory of the gatherings which was complete with the herd of pigs which are ritually unclean animals according to Jews and then he cast out unclean spirits demons from the demoniacs then in

chapter nine Jesus called Matthew the tax collector many considered by many Jews to be unclean because of his association with the gentiles to be his disciple and then he dined with tax collectors and sinners and Jesus doesn't stop there in that same chapter in chapter nine a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for 12 years reached out and touched Jesus and then was consequently healed instantly normally being touched by a woman with a menstrual bleeding disorder would have made Jesus unclean but what about in the case when that contact restored and healed the woman immediately and right after healing that woman being touched by the woman with a bleeding disorder

[36 : 34] Jesus then goes and raises a dead girl back to life and how does he do that he does it by touching her taking her by the hand in Matthew 9 touching a dead body also renders you unclean unclean but what if that contact brought the dead to life does that still make you unclean this issue of cleanness and unclean has been following Jesus all along and Jesus is systematically dismantling those walls of distinction so it is no accident that immediately after this teaching on what causes uncleanness Jesus then travels to the unclean regions of the Gentiles district of Tyre and Sidon and then there ministers to a Canaanite unclean woman who gladly calls herself a Gentile dog so this is a significant debate the very trajectory of salvation history depends on

Jesus' teaching here on what truly causes uncleanness this is why Jesus repudiates the Pharisees and describes objection with ferocity Jesus knows that if he gives the Pharisees an inch here that they will take a mile the implications of the ritual purity laws will forever bar those whom they deemed unclean from inclusion within the people of God so Jesus is here not only defending his 12 disciples from the accusation of the Pharisees he is fighting for the salvation and inclusion of all unclean people Gentiles like you and me all those who put their trust in him to be cleansed of their sins but that raises the question how can Jesus just simply do away with long standing old testament laws of cleanness and uncleanness that distinguished

God's chosen people from the other nations how can Jesus do that how can Jesus include the unclean people of God that should belong to a holy God it's because of what Jesus said early in Matthew 5 17 I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill them Jesus is bringing the law of God to its intended goal and finish line the laws of ritual cleanness serve to distinguish God's people from the unbelieving nations so that they could keep the covenant of the Lord their identity and faith and this was absolutely necessary because it was out of that people that the Messiah the Savior of the world the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world would be born to reconcile Jews and Gentiles to himself all of the Old Testament laws of ritual cleanness pointed to this coming Messiah Jesus Christ smack dab in the middle of all those laws about clean and unclean things in Leviticus chapter 16 which happens to be also the smack dab in the middle of the entire Pentateuch the first five books of the Bible the Torah the law of God the first five books of the Bible are structured as an elaborate chiasm matching sections in Genesis and Deuteronomy and Exodus and Numbers and then you come to the center of the book Leviticus and the center of the book of Leviticus is Leviticus 16 which is about what the day of atonement which takes care of all your sins and uncleannesses on the day of atonement you sacrifice one goat who dies for the sins for the cleansing of the sins of God's people and then you use one goat the second goat as a scapegoat you put the sins of the people of God on that scapegoat and then you release that scapegoat into the wilderness so that the sins!

Jesus fulfills both of them he comes and he dies as a sacrificial lamb he dies for the cleansing of our sins the atoning of our sins and in doing so he takes away removes our sins as far as the east is from the west Jesus who knew no sin was made sin for us that in him we might become the righteousness of God this is how he bridges that gap and reconciles Jews and Gentiles and saves them if God desires heart worship and not lip service if he demands inward transformation and not merely outward performance then no one is righteous on their own not one and because of that there can be only one solution and that is someone who can give people a new heart and that's

[41 : 57] Jesus we read this prophecy for our assurance of pardon from Ezekiel 36 25 to 28 when God said I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers and you shall be my people and I will be your God how can God say to an unclean people I will be your God and you will be my people have you wrestled

with your own uncleanness have you felt dirty

Hebrews 10 speaks of the fulfillment of this prophecy in Ezekiel and from Jeremiah 21 when God established the new covenant and writes his law on our hearts and it says in Hebrews 10 19 to 22 therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through the flesh and since we have a great priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water all that you feel and know in your life that is dirty and unclean all the sins that have defiled you all the past that has defiled you it is in

Jesus the high priest comes and he offers himself once and for all as the sacrifice the atoning sacrifice for sins and when you believe in Jesus and trust that he has done that on the cross in his death and resurrection then your hearts are sprinkled clean by the blood of the lamb and by the spirit of God so that a people who are unclean can stand before God and hear those words you shall be my people and I will be your God if you are here this morning and you are not yet a follower of Christ this is your only hope you can't make your heart clean if God only demanded external conformity lip service outward performance that's doable you can do that you have to pray five times a day yeah you can do that set an alarm if that's all that's required who wouldn't do it all I need to do is pray five times a day and I'm going to have eternal life who wouldn't do it you would set an alarm you would just do it and that takes care of it that's easy when your heart must be right before

God that is heart and only Jesus can make that right only Jesus can cleanse your heart so let us so let us as it says in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 let us behold the glory the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the face of Jesus Christ it's as we behold what Christ has done for us on the cross it is as we believe in him and hold to him in faith that we are transformed by the spirit from one degree of glory to another so that we obey him more and more from the heart let's pray for that yes father oh we were hopeless sinners Lord we were like the lepers who who call out from a distance before anyone can approach them unwittingly unclean unclean stay away unclean unclean oh Lord if you in your holiness approached us apart from

Christ that's all we could do but thank you Lord for sending your son Jesus Christ thank you Lord for giving him as the atoning sacrifice for sin as the scapegoat so we might be sprinkled clean thank you for washing us we praise you we thank you in Jesus name amen amen as