

He Heals The Unclean (Matthew 15:1-31)

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[0 : 00] Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat.

Jesus replied, And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, Honour your father and mother, and anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.

But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is devoted to God, they are not to honour their father or mother with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

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

Jesus called the crowd to him and said, Listen and understand.

[1 : 00] 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? 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 the 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. Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, Lord, son of David, have mercy on me.

[2 : 14] My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly. Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, Send her away, for she keeps crying out to us.

He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. The woman came and knelt before him. Lord, help me! She said. He replied, It's not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs. Yes, it is, Lord. She said. Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table. Then Jesus said to her, Woman, you have great faith. Your request is granted.

And her daughter was healed at that moment. Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and laid them at his feet.

And he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

[3 : 31] Good afternoon, everyone. Yeah, wonderful reading. Thank you so much, team. And keep your Bibles open, because this is a fantastic passage, as you have already heard.

This time it's your turn to read, though. I'd like to pray for our time, but I want to invite you to pray along. So I found this wonderful prayer. It's a red prayer, kind of like the Apostles' Creed. And so feel free, just respond where it says in bold.

That's your turn, okay? So let's stand, let's pray, and let's get into this passage. Holy God, we reach out to you with questions.

Teach us to cry out to you to question with great faith. For those we love who suffer from physical or mental illness, Lord, help us. For those who suffer because they feel as if they are outsiders, Lord, help us.

For those who despair from man-made religion, Lord, help us. For those who are here today needing the Lord to see them, help us. Yes, Lord, help us become a welcoming community and help us extend grace to others in the same radical way that you've extended grace to these people.

[4 : 40] Lord, help us. Amen. All right, let's take a seat. I wonder how many of you have crunched into a juicy apple before, right? Actually, apples are quite hard to find, but imagine you have an apple.

But then you take it and you look at it and you actually see half a bug or something like that. Has that ever happened to you? No? Okay, what's your gut reaction when that happens?

Okay, there's some shaking of heads. Who sits on the bus sometimes? Okay, a few people. All right, imagine you're sitting on the bus. It's one of these kinds of summer days, and so you have to sit next to someone else because the bus is full, and you discover the rich smell of BO swirling around you, and this is your spot next hour.

What's your gut feeling over there? All right, and what do you long for? You probably long for a shower straight afters, don't you? What have I told you that a study from the University of Arizona found that your phones, those in your hand, carry 10 times more bacteria than most toilet seats? Okay, all right? Okay, you're off for that hand sanitizer, perhaps. I want you to bottle that feeling or thought of ick or I need a shower, that sort of thing, those kinds of dualities or opposites.

[6 : 00] Bottle that feeling or thought because I think that's what crawls under the surface of that entire passage that we just heard read so well. Now, there's this idea of spiritual cleanness and uncleanness, pure and impure, or set apart or unworthy.

And then from there, there's these right and wrong ideas of us versus them as well that we saw in that passage, didn't we? Look, at its best, right, the idea of spiritual purity, okay, or cleanness, that can be a good thing, right?

We watched this movie called Inside Out, and there's like this one emotion, she's green, she's like, ugh, disgust or whatever. Her role is to make sure that Riley doesn't die, right? So this emotion of fear can help us, stop us from, I don't know, tripping over it or doing something really bad.

It can help us, spiritual holiness or cleanness, to treat God in the way he should be treated, as holy, at its best. But at its worst, we can take this feeling and then start to separate people, or talk about people in ways that hurt them, or start to think in ways that are hypocritical, destructive.

Here's the good news, though. We're all gathered here today. Nobody had to wash up before entering this church building, right? This is a sacred place, yes, but it's holy because of the Holy Spirit, Christ in me, meeting Christ in you, in this space.

[7 : 30] And praise God for that. We are God's dwelling place by the Holy Spirit. So as we approach this text, we want to remember that wonderful truth. Our hearts in Christ are cleansed by faith in the Lord Jesus.

There's a fair amount of action that goes on in today's section, so keep that passage open in front of you in chapter 15 of Matthew. As I mentioned last week, when we look at a passage like this, it's story time, details matter.

Matthew will repeat things, he will mention things to make us pay attention, to help us see what is going on and what we need to take away from this part of God's Word.

And today, one detail that will help us to understand this passage, Matthew 15, 1 to 31, to understand as one unit, as my real estate friends would say, is location, location, location.

All right, so you can help me with this one. Okay, what are the three locations in the Bible? This is a picture, all right, of the area we're talking about. What are the three locations that we have in our passage today?

[8 : 34] So I want to share. Where were we last week? Where did we leave off last week? Gennesaret. Thank you, Adrian. Yep. And where else do we go to? Tyre and Sidon.

Thank you. Great. Okay, so we move from there to there. And then afterwards, where do we end our passage? Yes? Yep, back near the Sea of Galilee. Okay.

So three locations. Can you see that? All right. And what we want to visualize is that there are three different scenes, three different movements. And when we do that, we're actually going to find that the action takes us, right, to three different things that we need to learn today.

All right, so I've just changed the map here. North is now actually north. And this is where we are. Where are we located? Okay, here's the map. We are PCBC. We are with the disciples. We're listening in as Matthew recounts for us. We're like following the GPS, driving along, watching on as Jesus shows us, firstly, what false religion does. Secondly, what genuine faith says. [9 : 39] And then finally, what true worship is going to look like. All right, so three scenes, three things we're going to see. Let's go to our first stop, a confronting challenge in Gennesaret.

We'll spend most of our time here from verse 1 to 20, a confronting challenge. So remember the context. We're in Gennesaret. And if you read the verse before chapter 15, verse 1, what's happening?

Ordinary Galileans being delivered from death, made whole, right, verse 36, all because of action Jesus. But as with any superhero story, when there's a superhero doing his best, right, there's got to be some supervillains that come into the picture.

And verse 1, here they come, the Pharisees and the scribes, party poopers from head office in Jerusalem. Gosh. Imagine how annoyed they are.

Okay? Have a look at the map again. Can you see where Jerusalem is? Like, the very bottom, like nearly off the slide. That's how far they traveled just to get up to scold Jesus.

[10 : 47] Okay? It takes a lot of effort to do that, to get out there and say, hmm, why do you disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat.

Of course, this isn't Jesus' first clash with the Pharisees. If you've been journeying with the book of Matthew over the past few years, you have remembered chapter 3, there were Pharisees at Jesus' baptism.

Right? On the Sermon on Mount, Jesus is actually criticizing the hypocrites as well. And then verse, chapter 12, there's also another confrontation all about plucking grain and so on.

But they keep showing up. They don't know when to quit. This time, their complaint seems like there's a hand-washing problem. What's going on here?

Right? What's going on here? Imagine someone who steps their shoe in mud. Has that ever happened? You know, you go out for a walk. Okay? All right? Let's say you all go out for a walk and it's, some of you went to McLean's and so this is a very live topic.

[11 : 47] You know, don't walk on the grass. Okay? Why? Because your shoes get muddy and then what happens? You've got to clean it, right? What if someone did that? It's really disgusting. But they just keep walking.

That's how the Pharisees feel about Jesus at this point. By eating first without washing hands, there's a spiritual sense of yuck that they see in Jesus and his disciples as friends.

And that they accuse them and his friends of continually breaking the tradition of the elders. The verb there is kind of like, why do your disciples keep breaking the tradition of the elders?

This is not a one-time offense. And at this point, we do have to admit our clean, unclean comparisons from our lives that kind of break down a little bit. We live in a very different world to first century Greece and Rome and Jerusalem.

Okay? Some cultures actually get this a little bit better. Okay? So if your culture has ideas of holiness or tapu, you get this a little bit better. What these religious rulers aren't primarily concerned about is not just hygiene.

[12 : 56] Why they are so upset is because of this. This is a bunch of Jewish leaders who had taken some very specific rules from the book of Exodus, chapter 30, 17 to 21.

These were rules about washing, yes, but they were only given to priests. And only before they entered and ministered in this very special tent called the tabernacle. Right?

A very specific context. So here's a rule for then and there. All right? To make sure that people know that God is holy and we are not. But what the priests in this day have done, these Pharisees, they've taken a good rule that protected an unholy priesthood and they've taken this rule and then just spread it out and said everyone needs to follow this rule now.

Okay? A good rule that saves a priesthood in the Old Testament, now a gross rule that enslaves and captures everyone, binds them unnecessarily.

Let me illustrate it this way. Who has a duke card? It's yellow in color and you have to, the ushers might ask you for it sometimes. Okay. It's this yellow library card. We all love it, don't we?

[14 : 08] We scan it sometimes when we come in. All right? Some of you don't even know what it is. That's okay. Imagine though if the ushers suddenly said you can't come in until you scan that

thing. That's what's going on here.

Okay? An extra rule that is not necessary that actually pushes people away. Imagine if I said don't take some snacks until you've scanned your duke card. Don't take the Lord's Supper until that yellow card is here.

That is the kind of overreach that the Pharisees were advocating here in verses 1 and 2. Okay? These were extra fences around the law. Can you see? Can you see the error?

Jesus can. And so what does he say? Verse 3. He actually just throws back another question, right? We heard that said so well by Eden, right? Why do you break the command for God for the sake of your own tradition?

Why do you break God's command just to uphold your tradition? Instead of defending Jesus' actions, he actually questions the way the Pharisees are using this kind of logic over and against the law of God.

[15:17] And so verse 4 to 6, this is what he explains. He explains how there's a specific law that the Pharisees are doing. Okay? There's this tradition that they are doing. It's called Corban.

They are allowed to ring fence a property and say, this is given to God. This is given to God. You were allowed to do that in those days. There was this tradition. And if you said that, this is given to God, then you could not give it to anyone else.

Not your parents, not your community, not anyone in need. Sorry, it's ring fence, okay? This is given to God. It's a lovely thought, isn't it, right? To dedicate your wealth to God.

And no one's saying you can't do that. But over time, people took advantage of this rule. This is given to God, all right? I'm sorry. I can't help you, Dad. This is given to God.

Sorry, Mom. You'll have to fight for yourself. Jesus is having a go at this kind of heartless logic.

[16:19] This breaking of God's command. They're not honoring their father and mother. Why? To uphold a human tradition. Jesus will not stand for people who quote traditions and guidelines and yet fail to live out God's commands.

Some of you might remember, actually, how in Matthew, chapter 5, verse 33 or 37, he's teaching on the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus criticizes the Pharisees. Why? They took something that was probably a good thing, right?

Making an oath to God. But then said, if you did that, you could avoid keeping your promises elsewhere. And Jesus says, no, just let your yes be yes, your no be no. Stop adding these rules into the picture.

These rules cannot save you. They could harm you instead. And so, verse 7, Jesus calls them hypocrites. Literally, two-faced, right, in some translations.

You're two-faced because you play show and tell with your faith and yet you do not have a genuine righteousness from the inside out. And to these kinds of people, people who are fixed on just rule-breaking and rule-making and yet neglecting God's mercy and grace, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29, 13.

[17:38] This is an Old Testament prophet who speaks and if you notice that quotation, right, what's really interesting I found this week was that this is more than just a great description of the Pharisees and their double standards, right?

Honoring with their lips but hearts far from the God, right? Worshiping in vain because all their teachings are just made-up human rules. That's a great description of what the Pharisees have been doing.

It's a great description of what often happens in our world today. It's also, though, a great diagnosis of the real problem. What does verse 8 say? Their hearts are far from me even when they honor the Lord with their lips.

So listen and understand Jesus calls the crowd. Listen and understand Jesus calls us here today. What goes into a man's mouth does not make him unclean.

But what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him unclean. What makes a person unclean? Spiritually ick. It's not unwashed hands.

[18:43] It's not following a specific rule. There's already an uncleanness inside our hearts. The real you. This is actually a basic truth. It's something that a Christianity actually preaches and declares forth very clearly.

The basic truth is this. Right? The defilement, the uncleanness is inside you, not outside you. And it challenges the worldview of neat and tidy people who think they can control everything.

Right? It challenges us when we think I'll just follow these rules and I'll be right for today. No. And look, the disciples, verse 12, say the Pharisees, they were, what, offended.

Right? Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this? And yet, actually, this truth is not actually very natural to us. We live in a world that says you follow this instruction manual and you'll have yourself a beautiful Ikea cupboard.

You follow this road code and you'll learn how to drive or you'll follow this YouTube tutorial and that's how you will cook the perfect laksa. We are always geared towards follow the instructions, get the reward.

[19 : 59] But Jesus does not talk this way when it comes to the heart. Right? Have a look at verse 15 to 20. Right? Jesus tells us, and he's a bit more specific this time, we skip down to verse 19.

What comes out of the heart? Wow. It's full of evil. The real you, if you're honest enough, is full of thoughts, of hatred, lust, lying, unbelief, slander.

Notice it's not just the act of adultery, it's to think about it too. Right? Any kind of sexual immorality. It's not like, oh, I've slept with someone, okay.

It's actually a catch-all term, that word. Any sexual sin. Jesus actually already taught his disciples too, right? Sermon on the Mount again. The root of evil is not just the act, but the thought.

The act of adultery is not just, is a bad thing, but the lust that began it. That is also adultery in your heart. Can you see, he keeps driving us to ask questions of our heart.

[21 : 04] Look, the only consequence, if you eat food incorrectly, right, the only consequence, really, is that it ends up in the toilet. That's what verse 17 says. But Jesus warns us, there is a yuck, there is an uncleanness that dwells inside of our hearts, that comes from our hearts, our sinful natures.

It cannot be flushed, can't be scrubbed, can't be detoxed. And this goes against what the world says. Disney 101 says, follow your heart. Biblical anthropology 101 says, the heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked.

Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 9. What makes a person unclean? Church, not unwashed hands, but impure hearts.

Not unfollowed rules, as many as there are, but unclean affections and desires. That's what defiles you and me before a holy God.

We need to know this. This is true of every human being, the sight of death. You're not what you eat. Rather, the Bible says, you are what you love, what you desire.

[22 : 16] What do you fear? What do you get angry or upset about? Outside of Christ, these feelings and desires, they will not scrub up before a holy God.

And look, man-made religion, it will come up with, I don't know, 12 rules for life. It will come up with eightfold precepts, or even a secular creed, that will get you by.

Or even Christian-sounding mottos can become man-made religion, right? Who's heard, no Bible, no breakfast? Who's heard, raise your hands when you pray?

Come on, give it up, give it up. Apart from a renovation of the heart, rule-based religion will give you conformity, but not transformation from the inside out.

It will not make you clean before God. The Bible says when we trust extra rules over and above God's grace and His law, you're going to risk binding people beyond what God has instructed.

[23 : 25] That's a dangerous thing. It's a dangerous thing, and it's very easy to do in some cultures, but it's such a dangerous thing. We are saved, not by rules that we follow, even if we keep them for God.

We are not saved by those. We are saved by what we just sang, by grace, through faith, as we believe and live out the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is Christianity 101, something that the Pharisees did not get, and Jesus has to remind us.

Look, taking down this false logic from the Pharisees, it should not make us feel proud, because none of us scrub up, do we? None of us scrub up.

And I want to suggest at least two traps that we, even as a church, can fall into that is very similar to what the Pharisees do, even as followers of Jesus. I think, firstly, we can become so focused on external behaviors instead of seeking the heart.

Whether it's in parenting, whether it's in leading our groups or encouraging brothers and sisters, we just get focused on what's happening on the outside. One of the first conversations, for example, I had with someone, they were really concerned because so-and-so in the church was doing this and

this.

[24 : 41] And as we talked more, I wanted to ask, how's their heart? How are they doing spiritually? I don't know. I'm just annoyed at doing this and this and so-and-so. Please remember, we need to look deeper if we are not to become like Pharisees.

You'll know the person once you know their heart. Behind every ungodly behavior, unwise decision, these are all external things.

There are internal beliefs about God or Jesus, about themselves that needs to be cleansed by the gospel. Right?

If our behaviors are like the tip of an iceberg, our values, our beliefs, and what influences them, they're all under the surface. We have to go deeper. We cannot just stay up here and criticize from the top.

We need to draw out the person's heart. Know them well. It might take time. People don't reveal their heart on the first conversation and not to people they don't trust.

[25 : 45] Right? We want to move beyond external behaviors because ultimately that's not where the real problem is at. So I don't know, at your next coffee catch-up, right, with someone from church, ask them, how are you?

And then ask them, how's your heart? And then give each other permission to share what worries you. What are you desiring right now?

How are they shaping your choices at home when you're tired, when you're stressed, when you're lonely? That will bring deeper transformation, not just changing behaviors up here.

There's an ogre, right? He's also a superhero. This ogre, his name's Shrek, he puts it this way, my heart is like an onion, right? It's got many layers. Sorry, I don't have the Irish accent today.

Our hearts are the same as well. Our hearts are many layers, right? So it's not a given, right, that you're going to be able to dig deep in the first go. The Bible actually says the heart is like waters that run deep.

[26 : 47] Or Jesus said, Matthew 6.20, it's like treasure to search out. I'll put a diagram up, and this will help, right? Ed Welch, he's a Christian counselor, he illustrates our heart like this.

It's deep, right? And there's layers of things over and over it. That's kind of what we're like. And some of the things, the layers on the outside, we can see, right, your culture, who you hang out with, what kind of work you do, and what you like to do with your money, and so on.

And yet other things are harder to spot because they're deeper. They're beliefs about yourself, about God. And all these affect our hearts, all these influence on the outside, so the arrow goes in, and yet all the things inside you spring out in what you do in the rest of life as well.

Seek the heart. That's where real change will happen among us. And our groups, please, let's ask about work and fun, but let's move beyond that too.

Let us honestly share what makes us happy or sad or angry. What do we love or fear this coming week? Be patient, but be consistent about asking these things.

[27 : 58] Then we go deep. Then we're truly getting to know each other and being able to help each other out. If we want to avoid, like verse 13 says, being useless plants, if we want to not be blind guides, seek the heart.

Look for it. Don't just look for behaviors. Go for what we believe and trust, not just what we do or don't do. Our second tip, I think, for us we can learn is that we too can be like the Pharisees by falling into the trap of adding to the Word of God and valuing human guidelines above God's commands.

I bring my Bible to meetings, but sometimes, sadly, I don't have to use them because most of our time we are talking about things outside the Bible. The Apostle Paul warns about constantly, right? He warns in his letters, don't get caught up with hollow and deceptive philosophy, human traditions, he tells the Colossians. Just as you receive Christ Jesus, keep being built up in Him.

There are so many entrenched rules in churches. They often start off as well-meaning rules, right? Okay? This will help us to understand what to do in this situation. But can we be careful?

[29 : 17] Can we be careful about making big decisions in the life of our church just based on tradition and hierarchy while overlooking whether a person's heart and character point to Christ?

For example, beware filling our church with man-made guidelines without preaching the gospel to our hearts day in, day out. That will bring real change. That will bring unity in our service far more than a bunch of rules can.

False religion, it's going to just keep making rules up and it can creep into a church like ours as well. So let's go for true Christianity where we point out to each other, yes, we are unclean spiritually. Not by man-made rules though, but by our hearts and our hearts can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Here in Gennesaret, this is an object lesson, very important. Jesus intends to expose our unclean hearts.

And look, if the problem is spiritual uncleanness, then what's the solution? Will it come from inside us? No. It must come from outside, right, beyond ourselves.

[30 : 28] What's the solution? I think Matthew, as he often does, he shows us a picture. He shows us a picture of the answer in the very next scene. Okay, and what do we see?

We don't see man-made religion in verses 21 to 28. We see genuine faith when we hear in on a very courageous conversation, right? Remember the mantra from before?

Location, location, location. So we've gone from Gennesaret and actually walking up the road right past that little border, okay? And so now we're in Tyre, the area of Tyre and Sidon.

Now we have changed our geography and now actually we're no longer in Jewish territory as it were. We're actually so far north on the map that some would call that unclean territory.

The Pharisees won't follow Jesus up there, okay? Be too unclean for them. And it's here that we are introduced to a most remarkable woman, right?

[31 : 29] And actually Matthew is very specific and introduces her to us as a Canaanite woman, right? Imagine if, I don't know, in the reading before, every time Eva spoke we were told it was a Cantonese woman or something, right?

When it's repeated we want to pay attention. Why repeat Canaanite? Because this woman should have been a stranger, not just a stranger, an enemy to God's covenant people Israel.

Certainly her ancestors were, if you read the Old Testament. And notice how actually the disciples, they were a little bit scared about having her around, right? Send her away, please. She keeps crying.

They see her like they see a crying baby they can't fix. They see her like they see an uncleanness, right? I need a shower after going to her. That's their attitude.

But that is not Jesus' attitude. And that is not stopping her from expressing bold faith, right? Look at her. Verse 22. She cries out the most remarkable words of faith.

[32 : 37] And even after crying out these words and Jesus doesn't answer, actually, she keeps going again, right? And the next verse is when Jesus points out his priority needs to be the lost sheep of Israel, including the Pharisees that he just met.

She's not fazed and she just comes, bows down before him, Lord, help me, she cried. Faith is as simple as that.

Lord, help me. Not a bunch of rules to follow, right? Lord, help me. Do you think you can cry that out? If you can and your faith is in Jesus, then that is what will transform your heart.

It's interesting how Jesus replies here, admittedly, right? He replies again, rather than being called a wild dog, the original word here in verse 26 is kind of like little dogs, okay?

It's a little ending on the original word. So Jesus is kind of being playful with the Canaanite woman, okay? So when he says it's not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the little dogs, right?

[33 : 45] You want to imagine a puppy, okay? So Jesus isn't trying to like scold the woman, just trying to play along with her a little bit in the conversation. And while she plays back, right?

Yes, it is, Lord. Look, even dogs eat crumbs that fall from their master's table. Touche. And Jesus has to reply and say, your faith, woman, is great.

Your faith is great. And your request is granted. And that hour, healing comes to her family. This is amazing grace, isn't it? Jesus extends healing and mercy to the unclean foreigner.

Have you ever felt like you don't belong anywhere? Have you ever walked into a room and you're like, I don't belong here? Jesus does not look at you that way. He says, you come and if you say, Lord, help me, I can.

I'll help you. You will not find this kind of saving faith buried among rules and rules and rules. You won't find it among lifeless rituals or religious nitpickers.

[34 : 56] You will find this kind of faith among the broken, the outcasts, more likely there than people who just keep rules for the sake of them. This kind of bold, courageous faith is found among people who know they're unclean and who just cry out to the Lord for his grace.

Lord, help me. Can you see the contrast? False religion says you keep this tradition and be safe, right? We can make some up. You come to church and you'll be saved, all right? You join this group, you hang out here, you don't do these drugs, you don't sit here, hang out with these people. We can pile them on, but it will construct boundaries and mislead people if we do not point them to life, to Jesus, the one who invites you to just say, Lord, help me. That's the gospel. Genuine faith says, Lord, help me. It crosses boundaries to do that. It will transform people from anywhere. This faith in Christ has power to save, not that one. This faith has power to heal, not that one. And you know what happens when this kind of faith takes root and spreads? We see this in our last three verses, right? [36 : 15] Verse 29 to 31, our final verses, they offer a glimpse of the answer. Again, we want to keep track, okay? Look on your GPS, we're changing location because now, verse 29, they come back, right?

Leave the borderlands and they follow Jesus back along the Sea of Galilee. We've been here before and there's a bit of déjà vu, right? Because Jesus again goes up the mountain. What's going on here?

There's a bit of a hill probably by the sea. You remember that picture of the lake, the Sea of Galilee, right? There's a bit of a rise. That's probably where Jesus went. But instead of that, you know, one person prayer meeting before the storm, that was the previous chapter, this time on this mountain we have a huge crowd coming to him, don't we?

Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others laying them at his feet. The original says throwing them at his feet even. And he healed them. What a picture. Don't let the chaos of this hospital scene, right? If you work in the hospital, you're probably like, I never want to see this. Don't let the chaos distract you because Matthew gives us a very important detail, right?

[37 : 28] Pay attention to the words in green. And they praise the God of Israel. And you're asking me, William, why are we paying attention to these words? It's not the God of Canaan.

It's not the God of Egypt. It's not the God of Rome. This is a different crowd than before, remember, right?

Like the Canaanite woman, probably told her friends about Jesus, here are now foreigners, Gentiles, perhaps others from Ty and Sidon, coming into the border, exercising great faith. We're not told who the crowd is, but we're told what they praise, how they praise. They praise the God of Israel. You say this because you are not part of Israel. And so imagine the picture, church. This is the nations coming to the son of David. This is like a Chinese church worshipping together a man born in Israel, a God who is king of kings.

[38 : 30] And this is actually a glimpse of more prophecies being fulfilled. Some of you know the prophecies in Isaiah, right? These are promises that no rule-based religion could come up with, right?

There were promises. Could there be a day when the Lord swallows up death permanently? Yes. Look at those crowds being healed, right? Avoiding death now.

They're coming to Jesus. Isaiah 25, verse 8. Sovereign Lord, He will wipe away the tears from every face. He will remove His people's disgrace from all the earth. That's what's happening here in Matthew.

Can you see that? An amazing crowd. And if all this is true, then will there be a time when your hearts, my hearts, will be truly clean?

Yes. It's true. See the cross when they crucified Jesus. All the blackness from our hearts washed clean by His blood.

[39 : 36] Every filthy thought, dark desire, impure word and deed, forgiven in Jesus Christ. Has He hung there for your sins?

Jesus is the true Israel, is He not? His greatest act is not to deliver a list of new rules and traditions, but to say, I fulfilled them all in me. Perfectly.

He offers His sinless life in exchange for our sinful hearts. He provides, as the Bible says, purification for sins. Past, present, future.

And all you need to do is to go to Him and say, Lord, help me. Do you believe this? If so, will you repent of an impure heart?

Not just breaking rules, but repent for your heart that needs cleansing from the Lord Jesus. Will you trust the Lord by faith and just ask Him, Lord, help me?

[40 : 44] Will you embrace and share this vision that people who are saying, Lord, help me, are welcomed together no matter where they're from because here in Matthew 15 is the gospel.

What makes a person unclean? Not unwashed hands, but impure hearts. Who can Jesus heal? It's not the religious rule keepers, but anyone from anywhere who calls Him Lord by faith.

He heals the unclean. So let's pray. thank you, Father.

We come not with big offerings and gifts, but broken and contrite hearts. And so, Lord, help us. Please.

Help us see the sins we don't even see. Holy Spirit, would you reveal, search our hearts, see if there is any unclean way in us.

[41 : 54] Point us to Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He leads us to life everlasting. We look to you now, Jesus. We thank you.

Amen.