

Matthew 15:1-20

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 June 2022

[0 : 00] Matthew 15 verses 1 through 20. If you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask you to join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in Matthew 15 starting in verse 1 and going down to the 20th verse.

The Word of God says, Then some 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 bread.

And he answered and said to them, Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, Honor your father and mother, and he who speaks evil of father and mother is to be put to death.

But you say, Whoever says to his father and mother, Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God. He is not to honor his father or his mother, and by this you invalidate the Word of God for the sake of your tradition.

You hypocrites! Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, This people honors me with their lips, But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

[1 : 02] And after Jesus called the crowd to him, He said to them, Hear and understand. It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, But what proceeds out of the mouth, This defiles the man. Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?

But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind guides of the blind, And if a blind man guides a blind man, Both will fall into a pit.

Peter said to him, Explain the parable to us. Jesus said, Are you still lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth Passes into the stomach and is eliminated?

But the things that proceed out of the mouth Come from the heart, And those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, Murders, adulteries, fornications, Thefts, false witnesses, slanders.

These are the things which defile the man. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this day, And we just thank you for the great opportunity we have of gathering together.

[2 : 06] Lord, we thank you for, Lord, the appointed time when we have to be still and to read your word. We pray as we have seen it, heard it, and read it.

Lord, now by the power and presence of the Spirit, That you would speak to each individual. Lord, penetrate our distractions, Get to the very depth of our being, And may the word of God become breathing and active within us.

Lord, may it accomplish that which you set it forth to do, And may you do it in each one of us, And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew 15, verses 1 through 20.

Now while we speak of the long heritage of events, Which even take place here, And we speak of a heritage of faith, And we understand that there are things which are traditionally done.

I want you to see from our text this morning, The danger of elevated traditions. The danger of elevated traditions. Traditions are not a bad thing, But when taking to an elevated position, Can very quickly become something which is bad, Or really to the point of being sinful.

[3 : 09] And we have this tendency within each and every one of us, To elevate those things which we are comfortable with. This is not something that was only happening in the time of Christ. This is not something which just happened in past history.

As a matter of fact, These are things which continue to take place even today. I would dare say that one of the greatest conflicts, That take place in any church, In any setting, In any place, Is when

anyone desires to lead the church, Or even persuade the church, Or to ask the church to do something, Which goes against a very deeply ingrained tradition.
Some of those traditions are very good. Some of them have a proper place. But we must always keep things in their proper order. And we do not look at this text in order to stir the pot, So to say, To say that there are things we must get rid of.
Because even Paul himself spoke of the tradition of faith. And he spoke of the heritage. And he spoke to Timothy, And the tradition that had been passed down to him, From his mother and his grandmother.
That he had a traditional or heritage faith, In the Lord God. And he encouraged him as a result of that. But in understanding these things, We need to even look at the text, And see that there is an innate danger, When tradition begins to be elevated, To the place that it is never intended to be.
[4 : 28] Traditions are there to teach us, And to instruct us, And to encourage us, And to move us. But they are not there to dictate us. Because we have but one which leads us.

And we see that in our texts. The first danger we see of an elevated tradition here, Is that it exalts the agency of man. That it exalts the agency of man.
An elevated tradition, Will inevitably exalt the agency or the work of man. And it says that the Pharisees and the scribes, Came to Jesus from Jerusalem.
Now the thing that we need to understand, Is these are the religious leaders. The religious elites. These are the ones who are set forth, As an example for the multitude to follow. And the word scribe, Can kind of be a little bit misunderstood.
Because a scribe was not only those, Who hand recorded the scripture for us. And hand recorded in particular the Old Testament. And we must at least give a little credit to them, Historically, because it is because of the scribal tradition, Which some attribute to starting, All the way back in the Old Testament.

[5 : 33] With the teachings of Ezra. The Ezra and Nehemiah period. Coming out of Babylon. Wherever it started. We must be thankful for the scribes. Because it is because of the scribal tradition, Of hand copying the Old Testament.

That we even have, At least historical archives, Of the Old Testament. God used them for the preservation of the text. Nobody was storing these on a hard drive, Or a flash drive.
Nobody was making copies of them. People were sitting down, And hand scribing them. But the scribes were not only the copyists, They were also the instructors, Or the teachers of the Torah.
So what we have here, Are the individuals who are the religious elite, That are teaching others, How to live according to the Old Testament, Or the Torah, the law. And they are those who are dictating, The pace of the religious life, Of how to be pleasing to God, In society in which Jesus is now, Ministering.

If you remember, He has moved outside of the synagogues, And into the crowds. No longer is he speaking to the religious elite, Now he is speaking to the multitudes. And these are those who are, At least by their own admonition, Charged with the instruction of the multitudes, And they come to Jesus, And they ask him a particular question.

[6 : 45] Why do you, Why do your followers not wash their hands? Now, We need to understand that historically, It was not the custom, At least, Or the expectation, That all Jewish people would wash their hands.

This was something for the Pharisees, The scribes, The religious leaders, The rabbis. This is something that they would do. A little bit later on in history, We find that this becomes the expectation, Of all people.
So really the challenge here, Is not to his disciples, The challenge is to Jesus himself. If he is setting himself forward, As a rabbi, And he is, Since he has disciples, Who follow after him, Then they are putting him, At a different level of expectation, And their expectation, Is based upon their understanding, And instruction of the Torah.
And they come to him, And they ask him this question, Why do not your followers, Wash their hands? Because see, According to scribal tradition, Anytime an individual, Would go to market, Or anytime an individual, Would have any interactions in public, Before they would eat, They would wash their hands, You say, Well sure, They need to wash their hands, To be clean.
No, Their hand washing, As recorded later on, When law, The oral law began to be written, Was very elaborate, Very ornate, Very particular, As to how you should wash, How long you should wash, What type of water you should wash, In what manner you should wash, And you know, It

would put to shame, How all the instructions came out, Of how we should wash our hands, When COVID-19 hit, Like we all needed to be re-taught, And re-educated, On how to wash our hands, And I understand this, I'm not putting anything down, I know there's a proper temperature, Of water, And there's a proper amount of time, And I mean, I've been telling my kids that all along, Just because you get your hands wet, Doesn't mean they're washed, Right?

[8 : 27] You can stick them in the water, And come out and show me they're wet, That doesn't mean they're washed, There's a way that things need, You know, Soap and water, And all this other good stuff, But for the Pharisees, It was very elaborate, And very detailed, And if you didn't do it in the right order, And you didn't do it the right way, Then you were unclean, You were unclean, See what you need to understand here, Is that this elevated tradition, Now the reason it's elevated, Is because God had commanded his people, God had commanded, For those of you that are with me, On Sunday nights, And Wednesday nights, And we're making our way, Through the Old Testament, We're now in the book of Joshua, And for some of us, We say glory, Hallelujah, We're moving to the historical writings, Because we've moved out of the Pentateuch, And the first five books of the scripture, And we've moved out of all the religious laws, And the regulations, And we rejoice in that, And the book of Leviticus, Speaks a lot of cleanliness, And how they should wash their hands, And how if someone touches this,

They're defiled, And how they should become clean, And if they touch this, They're defiled, And they should become unclean, And if they do this, And they had to wait this amount of days, Before they can be clean, And how there has to be the ashes, Of a red heifer outside the camp, So that an individual can cleanse himself, And all these pictures of cleanliness, And God expected his people to be clean, But now understand this, God also is a very God of practicalities, That he was not setting these things up, So that they could be elevated, He was setting these things up, So that his people could be healthy, He was a God who understands, How germs are passed long before man ever figured it out, He's a God who understood, That if rodents were carrying diseases, Which they do, And they're running across your earthenware vessels, That it would be better to crush your vessel, As opposed to hold on to it, And therefore subject yourself to various diseases, God knew these things, God wasn't setting a religious standard, God was setting a practical living, And he was setting his people apart, But man has a way of taking what God prescribes,

For normal living, And elevates it, And the reason he does it, Is because this is something we can do, See, Anytime we elevate a tradition, It's because it magnifies, Or exalts, The agency of man, God says, I need to wash my hands, I'm going to be the best hand washer you have ever seen, And I'm going to wash my hands in such a manner, And I'm going to wash my hands in such a detailed habit, And I'm going to do it into such a particular order, That I will be better than you, Because my hand washing is better than your hand washing, And my hand washing is going to be so good, I'm going to have to teach you how to be a good hand washer, Because it's all about how I did it, And we're just laughing about that, Because we're talking about washing hands, But friends listen to me, Any tradition that gets elevated, Beyond its calling, And beyond its proper place, Is always a result, Is because this is something we can do, It exalts the agency of man,

I mean I literally have heard of a church, That had a toilet, That was no longer working, And the bathroom stall was locked, And the new pastor tried to get a plumber to come in, And they almost fired the pastor, Because such and such gave that toilet to the church, That's what he did, And that toilet literally became the golden throne of the church, Because this has always been here, Listen, if it's broke, Remove it, It's still a toilet, I'm not trying to be mean, Or, Or, You know, The individual who gave it, Gave a toilet, And it still needed to be replaced, Anytime we exalt that tradition, Or lift it up, Or we become those who hold on to those things, And if we pay attention to them, It's because the thing,

Even in my own life, There are things in my own life, I have to look at daily, They are sacred and dear to us, Because these are the things, We, Can do, These are the things we remember, It always magnifies, The agency of man, And the scribes, And the elders, And the Pharisees here are saying, This is what we know how to do, And the hand washing was just part of it, I've told you they had over 634 oral laws, They took God's ten commandments, And made 634 oral laws, They took don't work on the Sabbath, And could tell you how far you can carry your coffee cup on the Sabbath, Because it became more of how good they could fulfill what God commanded, As opposed to what God commanded, How good can I do it, As opposed to what is he saying about it, Because the second reality we see, Is not only does an elevated tradition,

[13 : 37] Exalt the agency of man, It diminishes the authority of the word, An elevated tradition, Diminishes the authority, Of the word, Because when we hold on to things, Which we can control, And we hold on to things, Which we can do, And we hold on to things, Which are near and dear to us, Inevitably, We will always come to the place, Where we will be confronted with the reality, Either we would diminish the word, Or we would diminish the tradition, And when a tradition has been elevated to the place, That it does not deserve to be, The very thing that we diminish is the word, Because this is something that I have found to be true, And I hope that you have found to be true in your life as well, Anytime that I think that something is dear and precious to me, God always confronts it, And the reason he does, Is because he wants to be the thing that's most precious, He wants to be the thing that's most dear, He wants to be the object of my desire, Because he is, Deuteronomy 4, 24, For the Lord our God is a jealous God,

He is a consuming fire, You know, God is so jealous over his people, That he desires to be the center of their attention, The hope of their expectation, He desires to be the thing that is more precious to them, Than anything else under the sun, And the one reality that I have found in my own life, Is that when I begin to hold on to something, And I have to count it dear and precious, That God will always confront me with that, And I am found with the reality, That I will either diminish his place, Or I will diminish its place, Now when I diminish its place, He allows it to remain, And it stays there, But when I diminish his place, It may stay there, But it becomes almost insufferable, As I hold on to it, The reality is, Is that when we elevate traditions, And we elevate things that are near and dear to us, We always, Always diminish the authority of the word, Because Jesus asked them, He did not answer their question, He did not tell them why, He told them later on, In what they call a parable here, Even though it's just a very short saying, He did not immediately answer their question, As to why they did not wash his hands, He confronted them with another question, They said, Why do your disciples not wash their hands,

And Jesus said, And why do you break the commandments of God? I love the way Jesus answers questions, I love it when he's not talking to me that way, Because the reality is, Is that every time someone asks Jesus a question, He responded with a question, And he still does it to us that way as well, Right?

Anytime I go to the word of God, And I say, God, Why don't you answer my question? Sure, The answer to my question is there, But most of the time, It is an answer that I was not asking, And it comes to me with more questioning of my own motives, God, Can I do this?

And more times than not, He does not answer me yes or no, He answers me, Do you love me this? See, He responds with something that challenges me, And He does it here, He says, Why do you break the commandments of God, For the sake of your tradition?

[16 : 32] Because the word of God very clearly says, You shall honor your father and mother, Right? Very clear, It says, You shall honor your father and mother, And that he who does not honor his father and mother, Shall die, That was the clear teaching of the word of God, It is the clear teaching of the word of God, It's right there, In its simplest of forms, In the ten commandments, And the great ten sayings, We see it there, It is very clearly revealed to us, He said, But you, By your tradition, Have found a way around that, Because this is what you have decided, You said that any man who looks at his parents and says, Whatever may be a benefit to you, I have counted as Corban, That is, Dedicated to God, Then no longer do you have to give it to your parents, When they are in need, Because you have dedicated what would have been of their benefit, To God, And since you've given it to God, You've given it to someone greater than them, So you no longer have to give it to them, But here's the catch, Just because you declared something Corban, Did not mean you could not use it for your own benefit, So here's the way they would do it, They would look at their parents and say, Whatever I have that may be of gain to you, I have dedicated it to God, So I don't have to give it to you anymore, But the good news is, Is once I've dedicated it to God,

God still allows me to use it, So I don't necessarily have to give it to the temple, See, Traditions have a way, Of making the clear teachings, Of the word, Comfortable, They have a way of softening the edges, When the word of God says, If you will not honor your parents, You shall die, Man's tradition says, Yeah, But unless I give it to God, And by giving it to God, I'm giving it to him in spirit, I'm not giving it to him physically, I'm just going to say that I gave it to God, And I will use it however I want to, And by their tradition, They were diminishing the authority of the word, Because their tradition said, If you do this, You don't have to do that, And Jesus says, You invalidate the word of God, By your tradition, By man's tradition, Friends, Do a very quick study, Do a very quick study, Of

the historical reality of the church,
And you will find, That repeatedly, Across denominational lines, Across geographical boundaries,
Across language barriers, Man has a tendency, To set up a tradition, That will diminish the authority
of the word, Because it's easier, It's easier, It is easier, It is easier, Than looking at the word, And
just allowing to, Exactly whatever the word, Is very clearly teaching me, It is much easier, If I do it
this way, Because not only is it a traditional way, But it softens the blow, We run the danger of that,
And I'll just be honest, And I don't mean this to be, Despairing, And I don't mean this to be, Belittling
of the Southern Baptist Convention, But we run the danger of that, And I've seen it first hand, And
I've seen it in other churches, The cooperative program, Is a great program, The cooperative
program, Is when Southern Baptist churches, Decided to come together, And to work with one
another, For the sake of missions, And through the cooperative program,
They started six Southern Baptist seminaries, And I definitely do not belittle them, Because I
currently attend one of them, They support six Southern Baptist seminaries, They support the
International Mission Board, They support the North American Mission Board, They do Lottie Moon
offerings, They do Annie Armstrong offerings, And through the work of the cooperative program,
Southern Baptist have been able to literally, Give millions and millions and millions, And millions of
dollars, For the sake of missions, The problem becomes, Is when the local church, Looks at the
cooperative program, And says because we are writing a check, We are doing the Great
Commission, Because the Great Commission says go, It does not say send your money, And I
know that steps on our toes a little bit, And the reason it steps on our toes, Is because it is so much
easier, To send the check, Than it is to move our feet, It gets difficult, And the reality is, Is we do not
want to belittle, The cooperative program, Because through the cooperative program, We do more
with others,

Than we could ever do on our own, But too often, In many local churches, Because of the
cooperative program, They do not do what they could do, On their own, Because they are doing a
little bit, With others, Traditions are good things, But when they become elevated, To the place
where they diminish the word, Because the clear command, The commission of every believer, Is to
go, And when we diminish that, Because of a great tradition, We are elevating the tradition, And
diminishing the word, Because the word comes to us, With authority, Traditions come to us, With
opportunity, We must respect the authority, Of the word, And take the opportunity, Of the traditions,
We see third, And finally, Not only, Does an elevated tradition, Exalt the agency of man, Not only
does it diminish, The authority of the word, Third and finally, It fails to attain, The expectation of
holiness,

[21 : 41] It fails to attain holiness, And this is where Jesus answers, The question, Why do not,
Disciples do not wash their hands, Jesus says here, That it is not what goes into the man, Which
defiles the man, But that which comes out of him, In Mark's account of this very event, When Mark
accounts, In Mark says, Therefore Jesus declared all foods clean, And we ought to be, Doubly
excited about that today, Because there are, Big pans of stuff in the back, Which according to the,
Strict dietary laws of the Old Testament, Would be unclean, This morning I decided, If I was going
to smell like pork, From shred and bake, Shredding a barbecue, Then I wanted to smell like pork,
All the way, So I cooked bacon, Before I came to the church, And shredded the barbecue, So those
two things, Are dietary restricted, According to Jewish tradition, And they are unclean, But the word
of God, Is declared to us, All foods are clean, I enjoyed my bacon this morning, And I will enjoy my
barbecue, In just a moment, Okay, Because those things are clean, And I have the authority, Of the
word of God, Telling me, It is not that which goes into me,

Which defiles me, But that which goes out of me, But that does not mean, I can just put anything
into me either, So let's not take it to that extreme, But what we see here, Is Jesus answers this
question, With the reality, That they were attempting, To attain holiness, By an external act, They
were attempting, To be holy, And pleasing to God, By what they were doing, On the outside, All of
the washing of the hands, And the keeping, Of all these traditions, And the doing all these acts, And
Jesus gets to the core, Of the issue, And said, It is not what you do, On the outside, That makes
you holy, It is who you are, On the inside, And Peter, Asked a question, Says, Lord, Explain this
parable to us, And he says, Do you not yet understand, He says, It is not that which you eat, Which
defiles you, Because it goes into your mouth, It goes into your belly, And it's eliminated, Right?
It goes away, It's wasted, But it is that which comes, Out of the mouth, Because that which comes
out of the mouth, Proceeds from the heart, And from the heart, Comes all the evils, Adulteries,

Fornications, Immoralities, All these things, That make us impure, And unclean, Jesus reminds us, That man has not, Found a tradition yet, That can change the heart, There are a multitude of traditions, Which can move the heart, But friend, There is nothing you can do, On the outside, That can change who you are, On the inside, Nothing, I don't care how grand, The tradition is, I don't care how great, A heritage it has, I don't care how magnificent, The work it's done, Throughout the years, And throughout the ages, I don't care how much, It accomplishes in, In time and space, I don't care how much, That it can do, For the benefit of the good, Of our fellow man, No tradition can change, Who you are, To the very core of your being, Because that which we do, On the outside, Will never change, Who we are on the inside, Because tradition, Cannot do it, By faith and faith alone,

Faith in the risen savior, Faith in he, Who can do the heart surgery, Which we cannot do, See holiness is not attained, By the maintaining of traditions, Holiness is attained, By the self sacrifice, Of faith, It is coming to Christ, And saying Lord, I may have done, All the right things, And I do them, Trying to change my heart, But to the very depth, Of my being, I found that I am still, Who I always have been, See I went through, A lot of things, That were traditional, I read my bible, Before I came to Christ, I said my prayers, Before I came to Christ, I attended services, Before I came to Christ, I did a lot of things, Which were traditional, But what I found in the end, Is that no matter what I did, I still had a problem, On the inside, And the conscience, Was testifying to the reality, That nothing I did on the outside, Could make me holy on the inside, Because what was on the inside, Kept coming out, Of the mouth, And it was not, Until I realized, That no tradition, No work that I could ever accomplish, No efforts that I could ever put forth, That I must, Fall down in faith, And say only you oh Lord, Only you, See holiness is not attained, Through traditions, Holiness is not attained, Through great works, Holiness is a work, Of the Lord, In the inner man, Traditions are good, But they must maintain, Their place, Because an elevated tradition, Will very soon, Become the thing, Which we trust in, To make us holy, And the reality is, Is it will never, Ever, Do so, In the end, It will only leave us, The same as it found us, Working hard, But falling short, Only by surrendering, To Christ, And to him alone, Saying Lord, It is based upon, The authority of your word, And who you are, And your work alone, Tradition tells us, What we can do, Faith reminds us, [26 : 33] What he's already done, Before we do, What we can do, Let us first stand, In the faith, And the reality, Of what he has done, And then we move forward, And we keep him, In his elevated position, And we move forward, Thankful, Kind of ironic, Tonight when we gather together, We'll look at Joshua chapter 4, In Joshua chapter 4, They raise up 12 stones, Which will serve, As a traditional reminder, But there are not 12 stones, Piled up so that people, Will carry stones, There are stones piled up, So that they can remember, What God had already done, May the traditions, Remind us what he has done, And what he is doing, And may it push us, To lean more on him, Than ever before, Let's pray, Lord thank you for this day, Thank you for your love, And your concern, And your presence among us, Lord we pray, That you would move, Within our hearts and minds,

And Lord you and you alone, Would be the center, And the focus of our attention, May our hearts be directed, To you for your glory, And we ask it in Christ's name, Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.