

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 28/02/2021

Mini Series – “Making Disciples”

Part Fourteen - Matthew 15 v 1-28 “Kingdom Necessities”

All scripture references are taken from the ESV

Matthew 15:1-28: Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ² “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” ³ He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” ⁶ he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. ⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸ “This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” ¹⁰ And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: ¹¹ it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” ¹² Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” ¹³ He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. ¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” ¹⁵ But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” ¹⁶ And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷ Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.” ²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” ²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” ²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶ And he answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷ She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

When we look at how we are called to live as members of the kingdom of God, we soon discover that **God favours the humble**. Jesus teaches us that in the Beatitudes (**Matthew 5: 3-10** see p4). Those who come to Jesus and know the work of his Spirit in them are those who:

- Are aware of their spiritual poverty and mourn over their sin
- Exhibit meekness, and hunger and thirst for the righteousness imputed to them by Christ

As a result, they are merciful, pure in heart and peacemakers, willing to be persecuted for the sake of the kingdom.

It is a picture of humility. Matthew shows us what it looks like in the life of Jesus and those who come to him for mercy, but also shows us **what it doesn't look like** in the lives of a group of men called the Pharisees. Generally, we see the Pharisees as legalistic tyrants, from whose way of life we have been set free by Jesus. When we read about them, we tend to sit in judgement and say I'm glad I'm not like them!

Yet we need to see how the teaching in this passage of scripture relates to us, and not dismiss it

because we think Jesus dislikes the Pharisees, and none of this applies to us. In fact, Jesus doesn't dislike the Pharisees – he loves them. He challenges them in order to expose their hearts, revealing their sin to drive them to seek mercy.

- God shows us their failure in order to expose **our** hearts. Many of us have an inner Pharisee, and when the Spirit of God really opens our hearts through the word of God, we will see that we aren't much different from those men.

We may be in eternal danger (though only God really knows our hearts). It is possible that having first trusted in Jesus for salvation, we are now trusting in our own goodness to make and keep us right with God.

- It is only through the Lord Jesus Christ that we are put right and kept right with God, not through our own good works.

That is why it is vitally important that we look carefully into the word of God and allow the Lord Jesus Christ to expose our hearts to test where our trust is.

- We can spend our whole lives dutifully living up to the expectations of church and family, thinking that because we are good, we are saved, but never actually encounter Jesus in a way that leads to salvation and eternal life.

We need to look at this passage to see whether we are more like the Pharisees or the Canaanite woman. Three things are necessary if we are going to have the humility to enter and live in God's kingdom, sharing in it for eternity.

When it comes to the kingdom, God favours the humble.

1. The necessity of God's word (vv1-2 above)

The Pharisees (lay leaders of Judaism) were held in high regard by the people because they spent their time studying scripture and working out how to apply it to daily living. They sought to live out that application and taught the people to live out the principles. They were examples of what it meant to be good, so they:

- Tithed and did works of mercy
- Gave their lives to the scriptures, prayed and attended temple worship.

In fact, they lived out their lives in much the same way that we do as evangelical Christians!

Why did Jesus find fault with them? Through their study of the scripture, they came up with many applications that, over time, became oral traditions which were treated on the same level as scripture. No one questioned whether these traditions were written in the scriptures and what God actually required.

One of these was about washing hands before eating. The law of God required priests to wash their hands to purify themselves when they went to serve in the temple, but the Pharisees had wrongly applied that to the people in every day life. The Pharisees spotted that Jesus' disciples were breaking this oral tradition, and Jesus was permitting this! In their eyes, the disciples were dishonouring God. The Pharisees had a greater desire to honour God than many evangelical Christians – think about this! However, they were doing it in the wrong way.

- Jesus responded by showing them that, in their zeal to obey God, these men had put their traditions (their applications of scripture) above scripture itself, even to the point of breaking God's commandments. (vv3-6 above). He goes on to show that they were in eternal danger without realising it (vv7-9 above).

We need to apply the Bible to our own lives and culture, but those applications must not take the place of the Bible. Without the Bible, we will just follow the church rules of our denomination, historical traditions, the house rules of our family or the popular views of our culture.

We need to test every deeply held belief in the light of what God actually says in the Bible.

2. The necessity of a new heart (vv10-11 above)

The people are in danger of being misled by the Pharisees. As a loving shepherd, Jesus corrects the false teaching. The Pharisees were teaching that moral purity came about through keeping the law. They said that washing your hands before you eat would stop you taking sin into your heart.

Jesus shows that the problem of sin isn't external but internal, residing in the human heart.

The Pharisees rightly saw God's law as the standard of holiness, but thought they needed to get right with God by keeping the law. There was a problem with that, however. The standard God had set for acceptance was very high, and they knew they couldn't achieve it by their own efforts.

- Rather than humbling themselves and admitting they needed God's mercy, they applied God's law in a way that would make it achievable for them to keep. They set the bar lower.

That is why, when Jesus came, he taught that our righteousness needed to exceed that of the Pharisees. (Sermon on the mount Matt 5:21-22, 27-28, 43-44 see p4). Jesus showed that the bar is set much higher than we can achieve by our own efforts and therefore the law condemns us. (vv15-19 above). We can't achieve this because:
it's not what we do externally, but what we are internally that is wrong.

We may look very good on the outside (as the Pharisees did) but have a heart full of murder, adultery and slander that is as far away from God as a pagan who doesn't want to know God. All our external good might just be self-righteousness. Jesus shows the danger of this in **v13** (above). The Pharisees are showing that they are the weeds in the parable from last week. (**Matt 13** see p4). Their hearts are still wicked and far from God, though they look good on the outside. How do we know if we are like them? Self-righteousness shows when:

- We judge God's people by our own standards and are critical of them
- We see the speck of sin in another believer's life but fail to see the plank in our own
- We can't show grace to others – maybe we have never understood or received God's grace.

Above all, **self-righteousness shows when we dismiss Jesus**. To avoid this, we need the last kingdom necessity.

3. The necessity of saving faith (vv21-28 above)

The Canaanite woman does not belong to God's covenant people, but she:

- acknowledges Jesus as Son of David – the true Messiah promised by God. The Pharisees are blind to him
- knows that Jesus is the only hope for her daughter's healing. The Pharisees place their confidence in themselves
- knows that she doesn't deserve anything from Jesus so all she can do is cry out for mercy. The Pharisees sit in judgement over Jesus and don't see their need for his mercy
- is not put off by Jesus' apparent rebuff, showing humility and determination.

The Pharisees walk away from Jesus in disgust.

With spiritual eyes opened, and a heart full of faith, she keeps on seeking Christ's mercy, and receives it. When we stop trying to justify ourselves, realising that we are sinners who can't make ourselves right through our own efforts, and instead turn to Jesus, trusting in his mercy, we experience the grace of God for **God favours the humble**.

Who are you most like – the Pharisees or the Canaanite woman? If we are honest, most of us will say we are a bit like both. As undeserving sinners, we're trusting in Jesus alone to put us right with God but even so, we still justify ourselves before others, criticise those who don't meet our standards and fail to show the grace we've received.

We think God will only be pleased with us if we keep the rules. We need to

see the Pharisee in us and humble ourselves and seek the mercy of Christ.

Whether you are most like the Pharisee or the Canaanite woman, you need mercy for forgiveness of sin, and the righteousness of Christ to commend you to God. Then continue to trust him daily for that mercy.

- If we're Pharisees we need the mercy of Christ
- If we're pagans outside the church we need the mercy of Christ

When it comes to the kingdom, God favours the humble

Matthew 5:3-10

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons^[a] of God.

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 5:21-22 ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother^[c] will be liable to judgment; whoever insults^[d] his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell^[e] of fire.

Matt 5: 27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matt 5: 43-44 ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 13:24-30, 36 -43 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, 25but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. 27And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' 28He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 29But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 30Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."36Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." 37He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.40Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.