





The Heart of Man

Matthew 15:1-3; 15-20

Mark 7:1-9; 14-23

Teachings of Jesus

NOTE: The teacher may prefer to teach from Mark as it is more concise, and Jesus refers to several things in Matthew that will not be covered in this lesson.

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day; they led the Jewish people teaching them from the Old Testament. It would be similar to our church leaders today. But the Pharisees were very proud people, and always wanted everyone to know how good they were, and how they obeyed all the commandments given by Moses. They even made extra rules and “traditions” that they followed, and expected everyone else to follow, to make them more holy.

Explain this first, so they have an understanding of the way things were in the time of Christ. Then talk about rules, and different types of rules that people follow. Even though these Pharisees obeyed all the rules, *obeying the rules did not make their hearts right.*

No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. Romans 3:20

The Pharisees had many disputes with Jesus, and ultimately they were the ones who sentenced him to death. They were always trying to catch people doing wrong, and show them how wrong they were. Jesus did the opposite. He did not point out sins and shortcomings, he showed grace and truth with love, and that led people to repent.

However, Jesus did find fault with the Pharisees. He spent much of his time telling them how their ways of being holy were never what God intended. Because they obeyed all the commandments, they looked like they were doing the right things, and other people thought they were super holy. Doing all the commandments made them proud, and their hearts were wrong. Jesus said they made rules and traditions more important than the Word of God, and God’s Word had no power in their lives.

Jesus often called the Pharisees hypocrites; explain what a hypocrite is.

A hypocrite is someone who plays a part to get favor, and puts on a show. On the outside they seem to be much better than they really are; they are basically a pretender or fraud, all the time holding other people to the rules and values that they are pretending to have. They bragged about how they obeyed all of Moses’ laws.

The story starts with the Pharisees seeing some of Jesus eat some bread without washing their hands first. The Pharisees would NEVER eat without washing their hands. They even had other rules about washing cups, pots and tables.

Then the Pharisees came to Jesus and said, Why don’t your disciples follow after our traditions (their own rules) and eat without washing their hands? Jesus responded by calling them hypocrites and going back to a prophecy in Isaiah 29:13. It says the people act like they honor God, but their heart is far from it. Their worship is useless because they made up their own rules that they teach as God’s rules.





The Heart of Man

Jesus then calls everyone around to come listen so they will understand:

There is nothing outside of a person that will defile the person, but the things that come out of a person are what defiles him.

Discuss: What does the word "defile" mean?

To defile means to pollute, or spoil (like spoiled food) or make unclean.

What are some things that would be defiled? Dirty water would be defiled, etc.

Water can be defiled or polluted by something that is put in it; but Jesus was saying it is different with people.

Then Jesus says, if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. That means that not everyone that hears this is going to understand, a person has to open their heart to the Lord and see with their hearts.

After Jesus left the others, the disciples came up and asked him about the parable, because they did not understand. Jesus says, "do you not understand either?"

They were with him all the time and they still did not understand. Today we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us that gives us understanding.

Jesus explained again. He said whatever enters into your body cannot defile you, because it doesn't go into your heart. It goes into your stomach, and comes out when you go to the toilet. What defiles is what comes OUT of the person. In your heart are evil thoughts, improper thoughts, thefts, murders, greed, malice, deceit, envy, pride, foolishness. As the teacher you can expound on this and give examples they would understand.

He concludes with, these evil things come from within, and that is what defiles a person.

Matthew puts it in greater detail, and says what comes out of someone's mouth comes from the heart, and that is what defiles a person.



Jesus in the Story



The Jews thought pleasing God was about obeying the law, and keeping all the commandments, but in God's eyes it was always about the heart. The Pharisees kept all the laws, but it only made them proud. They judged everyone, and boasted in their ability to do everything right. Over and over, Jesus told them of their hypocrisy. He saw through their facade and it angered them because their hearts were not pure.

We now have a completely different way of interacting with God.

When we believe on Jesus, we are given a new heart, we now have His spirit on the inside of us and it changes us into a new person.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you..... Ezekiel 36:26

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person..... 2 Corinthians 5:17

Proverbs tells us to guard our hearts.

We have to be careful what we think about and meditate on, the things we watch, the things we talk about, and the attitudes that we allow to grow in our hearts.

One way we can guard our hearts by always giving glory and praise to God. It takes the focus off of us, and puts the focus on the Lord. Our hearts are defiled when we focus on ourselves and our goodness. When we focus on the Lord and his goodness, it helps us to guard our hearts.

What is in your heart will come out; the things that are in your heart are the things that you talk about. You do not want to allow evil things to grow in your heart so fill it with the things of Jesus; let him show you his love and how to love others.





Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

29. On the Rock

1. How many types of people are in the story?
2. What kind of person does what Jesus says?
3. Which person does not do what Jesus says?
4. What did the foolish man build his house on?
5. Whose house did not have a foundation?

Psalm 62:6-7

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of strength and my refuge, is in God.

30. Weeds in the Wheat

1. When could the servants tell that there was something else planted in the field?
2. Why could they not tell sooner?
3. What was the only thing that was different?
4. Why did they not pull the weeds when they could first tell what they were?
5. What do the weeds represent?

Matthew 7:15-16

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

31. Two Kinds of Yeast

1. How many measures of meal did the lady in the story use?
2. Is it possible to remove the yeast from the dough?
3. What do you have to do instead?
4. In your own words, what is "leaven of the Pharisees?" (Luke 12:1)

Acts 5:38-39

"...For if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but it is of God, you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God."

32. The Heart of Man

Read Proverbs 4:20-23

1. To what should we give attention?
2. To what should we listen?
3. Where should we keep the Word of God?
4. What is the Word of God to our bodies?

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life.

