



## SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS – January 19, 2025

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**Sermon Series:** 'Flourishing' – Community in Matthew's Gospel  
**Sermon Title:** 'Intention of the Heart'  
**Scripture:** Matthew 15:1-20  
**Preacher:** Rev. Mike Kenyon

**Theme/Concept:** Today's Bible passage recounts a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees, where they criticize His disciples for not following traditional hand-washing rituals. Jesus responds by teaching that true defilement comes from the heart, not external practices, emphasizing that evil thoughts and actions are what truly make someone unclean.

As Christians, this passage encourages us to focus on inner purity and spiritual integrity rather than merely following external rituals, reminding us that our hearts and motives are what matter most to God.

**Icebreaker:** (if with a small group) What traditions have special meaning to you?

**Reflections on the sermon:** What point from the sermon touched your heart most?

**Scripture Passage:** Matthew 15:1-20 (English Standard Version)

**15** Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, <sup>2</sup>“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” <sup>3</sup>He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup>For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ <sup>5</sup>But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” <sup>6</sup>he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. <sup>7</sup>You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

<sup>8</sup>“This people honors me with their lips,  
but their heart is far from me;  
<sup>9</sup>in vain do they worship me,  
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

<sup>10</sup> And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: <sup>11</sup>it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a

person.”<sup>12</sup> Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”<sup>13</sup> He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.”<sup>14</sup> Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”<sup>15</sup> But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.”<sup>16</sup> And he said, “Are you also still without understanding?<sup>17</sup> Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?<sup>18</sup> But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.<sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.<sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

### **Reviewing the Scripture:**

1. What is the setting of the Bible passage? (15:1)
2. What wrong were the disciples accused of doing? Who made the complaint? (15:1-2)
3. How did Jesus illustrate that the Pharisees and scribes were hypocrites and had broken one of God’s commandments? (15:3-6)
4. How did Jesus apply Isaiah’s prophecy to the Pharisees and scribes? (15:7-9)
5. Using this as a teachable moment for the crowd that had gathered, what did Jesus say makes a person unclean? (15:10-11)
6. Were the disciples concerned with the Pharisees’ reaction? How do you know? What did Jesus tell His disciples about responding to those who don’t accept the truth? (15:12-14)
7. How did Jesus redefine ‘unclean’? (15:16-20).

**Going deeper:**

1. Why do you think the Pharisees chose to address the topic of handwashing with Jesus as opposed to some other topic? Did this complaint have to do with personal hygiene or something else?
2. If you were a Jewish religious leader at the time and you had the opportunity to see Jesus, what would you want to ask him about?
3. In what ways do Christians get bogged down in unnecessary rules? How can you avoid that happening to you?
4. Can the heart be without sin? (Jeremiah 17:9) What is the act of justification and the process of sanctification? How do these bring hope to you?
5. What is one step you can take this week to develop a pure heart?

**Closing prayer:**

Dear Father-

We praise you Lord that you teach us what is truly important by looking beyond external practices to see into our hearts. Help us to focus on our inner purity and spiritual integrity each day. As we work towards that goal, please breathe new life into the relationships of our lives and in particular, into the areas where we struggle most.

In Jesus name, AMEN

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**Service Opportunities to Consider:**

Home for Refugees Home Team| TODAY - Patio. Join a team that will assist a refugee family find stability in Orange County. Contact Dave Ujifusa ([spainujifusa@hotmail.com](mailto:spainujifusa@hotmail.com)) for more info.

**Serve Day @ Community Action Partnership (CAP)** |Feb 8 @7a.m.- 9:15a.m. CAP provides meals and services to Santa Ana residents in need. This family friendly event will serve breakfast to all who attend. Contact Steve Woesner ([steve@woesner.net](mailto:steve@woesner.net)).

**Ladies Night @ OCRM** | Mon. Feb. 17 @ 6:15p.m. | Village of Hope. Women of Trinity join the Ladies of OCRM – Village of Hope for an evening of fellowship, dessert and a fun craft! Register online. Contact Debbie Ewing ([dewing@cox.net](mailto:dewing@cox.net)) for more info.