

8-16-20

Sermon- Beautiful Mouths

Scripture- Matthew 15:10-28, CTW Psalm 133

Hymns- 433, 75

Theme- Are we so blinded by our church buildings and our rituals that we don't see God? Are we blinded by the world's sinfulness? Are we noble like the Bereans, studying our Bibles daily to see what God says? After all that, Have we considered our mouths?

I. Introduction: What Reveals Your Heart?

Today we look at **Matthew 15:10-20** and see what Jesus has to say about blindness, what's in our hearts, and how what comes out of our mouths defiles us.

Jesus goes to the heart of the matter in Matthew 15:10-11 when he reminded the audience of Pharisees and teachers of the law that they were blind to the truth of the life God is really calling His people to. Jesus told 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."

A. The Pharisees we know for stressing the letter of the law, but Jesus was more concerned with the spirit of our words than slavish allegiance to rules dealing with things like kosher meats and handwashing.

The Pharisees made their living this way...people revered them because of their knowledge of all the minute facts and their wisdom as to how they should be applied.

The Pharisees were the rulers of thousands of pages of regulations which they had developed to interpret the words of Scripture.

They were the guardians of the language and their interpretation was for the most part, unquestioned until Jesus came along.

B. In truth, the Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they did not know God.

There are still churches out there today who maintain that our faith should be about slavish rules, regulations, and rituals...even passing tests in order to go through a gate that will get you closer to God.

There are churches out there who are all about making a show out of worship in order to attract more and more people. Some of those churches barely mention the Word, and when they do the focus is not on how people should mold their will to God's will in a life of obedience, but rather how they can find ways to overlay their will and lifestyle on their belief in a God that really just wants them to be happy, regardless of what they do or say.

The founder of our church, Jacob Albright is always a good reminder of how, and why, and where our focus should be.

I share the following from the EC Link which, along with the Bible should be required reading for all of the Evangelical Congregational Church to remind us of our beautiful heritage in the Lord. I believe these words should resonate and bind us together more than ever:

Though successful in business, contentment eluded Albright. Family tragedy struck in 1790 as three of his children died of influenza. In the year after the funeral for his children, Albright engaged in spiritual struggles.

He wrote that he not only had come to realize his great sinfulness but that knowledge of his sins was followed by great sorrow. He said "I fell upon my knees, and tears of bitterness flowed down my cheeks, and a lengthy and fervent prayer ascended to the throne of God for grace and remission of sins."

Renewed by this season of trial, Albright described himself as a new Christian, left the Lutheran Church and organized a new church that would be all about the members seeking personal holiness, devotion and a disciplined lifestyle.

This required daily prayer and study of God's word and rejoicing each day in the call and ability to serve God fully. Albright was very much about living the life God calls us to.

In today's lesson, Jesus reminds His people that the Pharisees were missing the point.

II. We Need To Remember That Our Words Defile Us.

Why? How do our words defile us? Our words reveal what's in our hearts. Jesus tells us that what you say and think reveals what is really inside you...what you hold near to your heart is what you really believe in.

A. The Pharisees were Offended

Matthew 15:12 states: "Then the disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?'"

Jesus offended religious leaders without apology. Did He set Himself above kosher law from the Old Testament? The Pharisees kept it in the letter not understanding the spiritual intent of the law.

There is a point here for all of us...it seems like the mantra that has come out of the pandemic and all of the protesting, marching and rioting is that no one should ever offend anyone for any reason. The new rules for living in the current society seem to say "BACK OFF" "GO ALONG WITH WHATEVER IS HAPPENING EVEN THOUGH YOU KNOW IN YOUR HEART THAT IT IS EVIL."

Are we afraid of sharing the Gospel because it may offend some people? If we are being honest with ourselves, we would find out that we may be reluctant to share the truth of the Gospel today.

A point to remember here is that Jesus is reminding us that the better you know the Gospel, the more likely you will be to share it. BE IN THE WORD DAILY!

B. Jesus Would Remind Us That We Are Being Four Times Blind.

In verses 13-14 He states a principal of the kingdom: "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."

In other words, "Don't be anxious about heresies. Every man-made doctrine, every man-made tradition, and every church ministry which God did not plant will eventually disappear, so dismiss them from your thoughts."

C. Therefore, Speak and Lead From the Heart

Jesus reminds us in verses 15-18 that "... the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man."

Our words tell what's in our hearts. Our hearts defile us, and outward washing rituals and kosher dietary regulations cannot make us clean inside.

The heart is the corrupt source of this defilement. Sinful words come from there, and by polluting others only serve to defile others as well. So Jesus reminds us to get that garbage out of our hearts.

In verse 19, He reminds us what can be stored in our hearts: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." All these evil things begin with thoughts.

This follows the order of the Ten Commandments, but instead of covetousness ends with blasphemies or slander, the Greek word can mean either.

In this lesson from Matthew today, Jesus is really trying to remind believers that breaking the Ten Commandments is done in the heart, not just in the flesh .

III. So How Do We Apply This In Today's World?

A. Application 1

Blind leaders place human traditions ahead of matters of the heart.

Blind leaders find excuses to sidestep the instructions of God.

Blind leaders preach "inclusion," meaning accommodation to the sins of the world, so that they can keep the money coming in.

Blind leaders preach "unconditional love," often preached as "come as you are, AND STAY as you are" meaning no need to change, when real love is preaching repentance, and rescuing sinners from hell.

B. Application 2

How can we avoid being misled by blind leaders? Listen carefully to their words.

The Bereans listened carefully to Paul (Acts 17:10-11), but then went right to the synagogue and checked it all against Scripture

Being a good listener means we don't naively swallow everything we hear, but analyze it, and pray over it.

For Christians that also means we compare it to the Scriptures. Don't just believe any preacher. Follow along in your Bibles. If we don't study our Bibles daily, we become quickly blind.

Remember the words in 1 John:1-8

"1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the

Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood."

In today's passage, Jesus concludes by saying that blind leaders and their followers will be "uprooted... [and] fall into a pit." "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

We often focus on the physical side of religion, our buildings, our rituals, but not our changed hearts, yet that's the very definition of repentance.

(Matthew 13:16-17) reminds us of our special status...something that allowed Jacob Albright to rise up and honor God regardless of what was happening in the world:

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."