**Calvary Fellowship 10.2.2022 Matthew 15:1-28 “The Heart of the Matter”**

* **So the other day, my wife hears a noise in the kitchen above the cabinets and thinks a rat got into the house**
* So I get the ladder & look, but nothing’s there - I look in the attic & nothing
* So we forget about it and move on with life - I get home the next day & see a palm on our roof and think that’s what it must have been
* So that afternoon we’re eating lunch & Mia says, ”Dad, what's that?”
* Carey is standing at the sink and I look over & above her is a giant lizard/ iguana looking over top of the cabinets
* I say, ”Carey, U were right. There is a critter up there.”
* She looks up & sees that giant thing & she freaks out - She’s speechless
* All she keeps saying is, ”Get the Windex. Spray it with Windex.”
* I say, “Carey, Windex isn’t going to do anything except clean the iguana and leave it without any streaks.” - I need everyone to step back & let me work
* So I grab a broom, creep up near it & I sweep it so that it hits the floor
* It tries to run away, but I have the reflexes of a cheetah, so I whack it with the broom to stun it
* Then I lay the broom on top of it like Thor’s hammer so I can open the side door & with a skilled move than can only come from growing in Boston playing hockey, I flung him out of the house with a wrist shot
* My goal is to then throw it over the wall b/c I used to live at the end of my community & if I send it over the wall, the HOA has to deal w/ it
* I told my younger 2 kids about it b/c they were in the pool & they have this habit of leaving the door open when they go outside which is how it got inside
* So my son sees the dead iguana/ lizard & says, “Dad, why didn’t U throw it over the wall?” - It was a moment where I realized I was teaching my son well
* Then Livi comes over to see it & says, “Wow, that lizard is huge. But Dad, why didn’t U throw it over the wall?”
* So I grabbed a shovel and flung him over the wall b/c I’m a good dad
* **And then we had talk about leaving the door open - in which the giant lizard became a cautionary tale about**
* B/c I am always telling my kids to close the door b/c AC isn’t cheap
* And my favorite part about that is my kids telling me they don’t leave the door open - I’m like, “You’re going to tell me that w/ a straight face?”
* I’m surprised the temperature hasn’t gone down in Miramar b/c my kid have been air conditioning the outside for years now
* **Just a couple of weeks ago 1 of my kids left the door open when they went outside & I saw it as it was happening**
* I don’t want to tell U which of my kids it was, but I said, “Xander, close the door?” - He said, “Oh…I left it open for you”
* I said, “U had no idea I was behind U b/c I can move silently like a jackal through the streets.” - he said, “Well, then I left it open for the jackal behind me”
* But what happens in your house is the same thing that happens in your life
* What U allow in is a lot harder to purge later on
* **And in our story as we continue through the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is confronted by a couple different groups opposing Him**
* AndHis response is amazing b/c He’s going to show us how important it is to guard our hearts b/c what comes out of us is directly related to what goes in
* So this message is going to challenge us to live w/ wisdom - that while some things are legal or socially acceptable, they may not be wise or helpful
* And the sooner we take charge of what we allow into our hearts, the better off we’ll be in our relationships, our future, & our joy…

**———(v. 1-9)———**

**#1 - I Need to Accept Responsibility for Myself**

* **So a couple of things that are important to note as we get going - some of U may have the question, “Who are the Scribes & Pharisees?”**
* I mean, they are nowhere to be found in the OT & when we open the pages of the NT, they’re everywhere - so where did these guys come from?
* The Scribes were the guys who made copies of the Bible, the OT
* The printing press wasn’t invested until 1450, so these guys were basically Xerox machines, making copies of the Bible
* B/c they are handling the Bible all day every day, they are experts in the law
* So they’re also called the lawyers b/c they knew the law better than anyone
* The Pharisees formed as a response to the invasion of Greek culture in Jewish life - they thought the temple had become corrupted
* So a group of people called “the separated ones” rose up - that’s what Pharisee means - they were prominent in the synagogues as teachers of the law
* They had basically 2 strings on their guitar - 1) separation from pagan culture
* 2) strict obedience to the law of Moses
* **So what’s the problem? We’ve got the guys who make copies of the Bible & the guys who adamantly want to live according to it**
* The argument starts over whether washing your hands before U eat is a sin or not - that’s ultimately where the argument begins, but it opens to a larger issue
* The tradition of the elders later became the Mishna, which is a commentary of how to live out the commands of the Torah
* So when the Bible says for Jewish people to make booths to live in during the feast of Tabernacles - the Mishna gives greater explanation
* But it gets very detailed into how to keep the sabbath, how to prepare food, & how to wash your hands - the discussion here
* Except the Mishna was completed until the early 2nd century A.D., so everyone was still debating these issues
* This is the problem - washing your hands before U eat is not in the Torah (it’s a good idea, but it’s not in the Bible)
* **So why did they say it was necessary? B/c they believed that to touch food w/ unwashed hands made the food unclean**
* The problem was that every good Jew knew Leviticus 11, that’s where God lays out what foods are clean (kosher) & unclean
* But the Pharisees were calling clean foods unclean on the basis of the fact that the person didn’t wash their hands
* “Anyone who does not wash his hands before he eats bread is as unclean as if he had had sex with a prostitute, as it is written, ‘for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread.’” (Sotah 5a)
* So if U make a peanut butter sandwich & didn’t wash your hands, to them U basically just cheated on your wife
* You’re never going to look at that jar of Jif the same way again
* Jesus’ issue is, they were making religious determinations about people based on people following their preferences, not the Bible
* **Jesus flips it & asks why they nullify the law of God by your traditions?**
* “Honor your father and your mother.” (Exodus 20:12)
* But they came up w/ this idea called “Corban” = gift
* What U did was say to all your stuff “Corban” of “Gift to God”
* Then if your parents were in need, U would say, “I wish I could help U, but I declared all of my possessions as Corban
* This didn’t mean anything – You’d tell God, “All I have belongs to you.” - But you’d still use your possessions any way U pleased
* **This sounds so devious, but we do it too in our own way**
* Here’s how we do it now - we say, “Well, God knows my heart”
* That means, I didn’t do what I was supposed to do, but I had the best of intentions, so that should count like I did what I was supposed to do
* Last Friday night we hung out w/ some friends & they made these brownies that I love - they’re gluten free & it doesn’t make sense, but they’re the greatest brownies of all time - so I took all of the leftovers home
* The next morning I meant to have a brownie for breakfast & I accidentally ate all of them - I’m not sure what happened - it’s all a blur
* But when my kids woke up, they said, “Where’s the brownies?”
* I said, “Hey, funny story. I ate accidentally ate them all.” - Can U believe they were mad at me? - I Said, “How dare U? God knows my heart.”
* They said, “He does & He says U need to watch your cholesterol.”
* **So the same day, I picked up Chick-Fil-A for lunch b/c when you’re buying Christian chicken, U always know that’s God’s will**
* That’s why I never even check my order - I get whatever they feel God wants me to have - except they did forget my meal & I caught it
* I told the guy, “This is why Ronald Reagan said, “Trust, but verify.”
* So Carey ordered the heathy chicken sandwich & I had a coupon for a free original chicken sandwich & I thought Carey might want it
* So I brought it home & said, “Hey, I had a coupon for a free original chicken sandwich. I thought U might want it.”
* She says, “That’s what I really wanted, but I felt bad b/c I thought I should just have the healthy 1.” - what’s the secret to your wife’s heart? Carbs
* But listen, “God knows by heart” - that’s Corban - it’s made up stuff that we say to get out of obeying God & it’s not working
* B/c God blesses our actions, but our intentions

**———(v. 10-20)———**

**#2 - I Need to Evaluate My Heart**

* **Now there’s a little bit of a problem here at 1st glance - Jesus says it’s not what goes into your mouth that makes U unclean**
* Those who knew the law might disagree & say, “Well, there’s an entire chapter in Leviticus about what Jews should eat or not eat.”
* Here’s what U need to understand when U read the OT commands that I know sometimes seems a little odd to us b/c we are 4,000 years & 1/2 a world away
* **So I went to High School in Coral Springs & there was a really big Jewish population in Coral Springs, so most of my friends were Jewish**
* And they varied in their level of practicing their faith - most were fairly secular
* But I had a few friends who took the dietary laws very seriously
* I attended Passover Seders w/ some of my friends’ families
* They’d ask me what I believed & I’d say we were Catholic - but ewe were Catholic in the same way that Olive Garden is an Italian Restaurant
* My friend Brian would take the bread off his burger when we went to Burger King when he was celebrating the feast of unleavened bread
* My other friend Craig had never eaten ham, sausage, or bacon in his life - when I asked him why, he said, “B/c I’m Jewish. It’s against my religion.”
* I have another friend who was Jewish who would drive 50 miles if he knew about a good pulled pork sandwich he hadn’t tried
* So here’s the question - was the act of eating the pulled pork sandwich the thing that was making him unclean in a Biblical sense? No
* The food that he was eating was a revealer of where his heart was
* This is the point that Jesus is making - that U can eat all the right foods & your heart still not be right b/c what’s coming out of your heart is poison
* So Jesus’ point isn't that Jews shouldn’t keep the OT dietary laws - it’s that what’s coming out of your heart is the true revealer of your relationships w/ God
* **So this begs the question, “How do U make sure that what comes out of my heart is good?” - by changing your diet of what U allow in**
* Have U ever heard the Baby Shark song? That’s a week of your life that U aren’t getting back - b/c once it’s there, it ain’t coming out
* Think about hurtful things that people have said to U - think about lies you’ve told yourself that you’ve believed - once it gets in, it’s hard to get them out
* This is why we have to be vigilant about what we let in b/c they get in & they want to stay & start taking charge of your life
* “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)
* **Think about that - We are told to take every thought captive**
* What does that mean? The word “captive” means to carry into exile
* For the reader in that day it would remind them of Israel & Judah being carried away into captivity - removal from their natural habitat b/c there’s a new king
* This is what Paul is saying we need to do w/ every thought that comes into our minds - we need to capture it & send it away b/c there’s a new king in our lives
* Listen - just b/c U have a thought doesn’t make it valid - sometimes we build entire stories & theories on things that didn’t even happen
* Sometimes U need to 2nd guess the things you’re thinking b/c U simply aren’t right & taking your thoughts captive would save a relationship
* Sometimes our thoughts are incomplete at best, but we act on them like they’re Gospel - don’t do that - don’t let your thoughts get out of hand w/o facts
* **It’s like my son - he loves celery - he wants to eat celery whenever we have it in the house - however, he just tried celery w/ ranch like 2 year ago**
* He says, “Dad, it’s so good w/ ranch. Did U just come up w/ this?”
* I said, “Xander, I think celery & ranch have been around for like 5,000 years.”
* This whole time he think celery couldn’t get any better & then ranch dressing comes along & starts rockin’ worlds
* If U let your incomplete & uninformed thoughts control U, it’s going to ruin U emotionally, ruins your relationships, & ruin your future
* So when negative thoughts come into your head b/c you’re trying to piece facts & motivations together, take them captive by employing the truths of the Bible
* “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” (Philippians 4:8)
* If it doesn’t fit that criteria, then throw it out b/c you’re probably getting yourself worked up over nothing
* And if it’s a bad thing that turns out to be true, then deal w/ it as the situation presents itself - this is why people are so stressed out & angry all the time
* They’ve been trying to play detective & figure out the actions & attitudes of people - Instead, deal in reality - yes, there will be problems in life
* But we multiply our problems when we try to deal w/ the fake news in our head in addition to what’s really happening in our lives

**———(v. 21-28)———**

**#3 - I Need to Release My Expectations**

* **If you’re not paying attention, this seems like a strange exchange where Jesus is ignoring this mom until she says something to get His attention**
* But once U get the background & look a little closer, you’re going see the genius of Jesus & what He’s trying to do for this woman
* Remember what’s just happened - Jesus has had conflict w/ the religious leaders over what comes out of their mouths being the thing that defiles U
* So Jesus goes about 35 miles north (pic) - He was in Galilee & travels north to the are of Tyre & Sidon - this is big b/c Jesus has left Israel
* This is important b/c of the conversation He has w/ this woman
* **There’s a couple of facts that we need to mention to set the scene**
* Jesus has left Israel, gone to Tyre & he has entered a home
* “From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet.” (Mark 7:24-25)
* The woman comes to Jesus & seeks to address Him by His Jewish title of Son of David - that was a title reserved for Israel’s Messiah
* And Jesus doesn’t respond - why? B/c she’s not Jewish & she doesn’t have any idea what Son of David means - she’s saying it to get something out of Him
* She addresses Him as Israel’s Messiah, He says, “I’ve come for the lost sheep of Israel.” - Essentially saying, “Yeah. I’m Israel’s Messiah. Not yours”
* **Then she falls down & worships Him & says, “Lord, help me.”**
* Once again, she is pressing her to see if she understands what she’s doing or is she going through the motions to get something
* He says that U don’t take the children’s bread & give it to the puppies hanging around the dining table - probably pointing to the kids & puppies in the house
* And she says, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” - and now He knows that she gets it & heals her daughter
* **She wasn’t pushing her away - instead He was drawing her in**
* Remember, she didn’t come to Israel seeking Him - no, He was in Tyre
* There’s something so powerful here that we have to embrace or we will live very frustrated lives when we pray & God’s act the way we want Him to
* Jesus wasn’t moved by her fancy prayer - He was moved by her faith
* Jesus wasn’t moved b/c she thought Jesus owed her something
* Instead, Jesus was moved when she realized that anything God does is an act of love & grace
* **When I was a young Christian, I believed the most spiritual people were those who used old English or quoted the Bible while praying**
* I mean, they were telling God, “God, here is an excerpt from your writings”
* I used to call those people “the Professional Prayers”
* I remember 1 day I went to a small group at church & the guy leading it was a professional pray-er - he used words I had never heard before
* “Sovereign king of the universe, we come prostrate before thee in supplication before thy throne.” - Carey & I were dating at the time
* I spoke w/ Carey the next day & she said, “How did your class go?”
* I said, “It was ok, but we need to pray for the leader b/c I think he’s having medical problems b/c he laid his entire prostate before the Lord.”
* This story is proof positive that U don’t need to speak in King James English or speak in a deeper voice to have God hear U
* Instead, God is looking for humility - He’s looking for a heart that wants to draw close to Him & see Him move
* The word that we translate as “worship” is the Greek word “proskuno” literally means “to turn towards & kiss” - that’s what worship is
* For those of U that are married - think about kissing your spouse
* There’s no posturing or strategy or trying to seem like more than U are
* Instead, it’s this wonderful act of closeness & relationship
* And that’s what real worship is - a wonderful act of closeness & relationship
* And when U realize that this is what God is seeking - if we think what God is seeking is a pretentious religious show, then we won’t hear from Him
* B/c that was the thing that He indicted for the Pharisees for
* And here’s the other thing - this is the key to every relationship in your life
* What your marriage needs - it’s more embracing & less expectations
* What your kids need - it’s more humility & less trying to be right
* What your careers needs - it’s more reality & less positioning
* B/c we want Him to answer & we need Him to answer, but He loves us too much to let us think that putting on a show is why He answered
* **Listen - the plans of God for your life are greater than your plans for your self - but when you’re calling & He’s not answering, it doesn’t feel like it**
* However, it doesn’t make it any less true - his plans are better
* There is something about the process of praying, waiting, &dropping the masks we put on & getting real that draws us to the place of asking for the right thing
* **When I was in college, I was a deliver guy at night so I could go to school during the day**
* There were a few times where I’d get a delivery & I’d get to the house & I’d knock & no 1 would answer
* Then I’d take a 2nd look at the address & realize I was at the wrong house
* I’d hop in my car, get to the right place & the door would be opened
* **Here’s the point - sometimes we’re simply knocking on the wrong doors**
* And sometimes we’re asking the wrong way b/c we think the power is in the way we ask & not in the Person we’re asking
* And God is too good to give us anything less than what we really need
* And sometimes God does a work in us while we’re knocking on the wrong door & that’s what inspires us to move & start knocking on the right door
* B/c God is good & He does good…