

True Religion

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[0 : 00] Matthew 15, 1-20, that's our text for this morning. As we read through it, let me just remind you that we are preaching through the book of Matthew.

It's not the text I chose, it's where we are in the book of Matthew. And so you'll see why I say that as we look at the passage. Matthew 15, beginning in verse 1.

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat. He answered them, And why do you break the commandments of God for the sake of your tradition?

For God commanded, Honor your father and your mother, and whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. But you say, If anyone tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honor his father.

So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[1 : 13] In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the people to him and said to them, Hear and understand.

It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person. Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?

He answered, Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone. They are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

But Peter said to him, Explain the parable to us. And he said, Are you still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

[2 : 22] These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

And Lord, we come before you in a strange and a different situation, but Lord, we pray that your spirit would be no less present through the preaching of your word. For all those who are listening, we pray that your spirit would work through it, even for some who will only be able to listen to the recorded message, that your spirit would still be evident, that you would work in the heart to those who hear, that you would bless the preaching of your word.

Lord, help us to glorify you, even though we cannot do it in the usual way. May we give you the glory. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Now, I want to remind you, if you've been following along with us in the book of Matthew, that Jesus has removed himself from the area around Jerusalem.

He's moved into the region of Galilee. And the Pharisees and scribes now have come to him, really attacking the practice of his disciples. And it gave him the opportunity to teach something very important about the kingdom of heaven, even as he's done already with the kingdom parables back in chapter 13.

He's continued to teach his disciples about the kingdom. And Jesus is telling us about the nature of true religion, true holiness, even what true worship is.

[3 : 43] He's teaching these crowds also about the teaching of the Pharisees. He's warning them about the Pharisees. So what I'd like to do today is compare man-made religion, if I can call it that, with true religion.

How do we distinguish what's true and what's not? In some ways, this is pretty relevant today because we've already spoken about this not being really a worship service, but a sermon and how things are different.

Is there still true worship going on? What defines what true worship is? That's what I want to look at today. What is the issue that separates these two? False religion, man-made religion that we see modeled in the Pharisees versus true religion that Jesus speaks of here.

So first, let's look at man-made religion. As I've said, some Pharisees and scribes have come all the way from Jerusalem down to where Jesus is ministering to express for the express purpose of confronting him.

Somehow they've heard, maybe rumors have reached them, but they've heard that his disciples aren't washing their hands. Now, this may sound pretty far-fetched or more far-fetched today than it did maybe a month ago that we would be so offended by this, but the Pharisees here are offended by this.

[4 : 54] And again, I didn't pick this. We've joked as elders that maybe the appropriate text for this time would be to preach James, I think it's 3.8, wash your hands, you sinners. But that's not the text that I get to choose.

And so here I am in Matthew 15, and the Pharisees are concerned because Jesus' disciples don't wash their hands before they eat. Now, on top of that, we read later in Luke that it actually says that they confront Jesus because he wasn't washing his hands before they eat.

So it wasn't just Jesus' disciples. Jesus' disciples weren't washing their hands before they ate. Now, I want to be clear, this has nothing to do with hygiene.

God's word's not encouraging, not washing your hands before you eat, especially kids out there, boys and girls, wash your hands. Adults at this point, wash your hands before you eat. It's been really communicated to us in the media, hasn't it?

The need to wash hands. And I've seen people say, it's not just the virus. You should have been washing your hands anyway. So in terms of hygiene, I think it's okay for us to say, it's wise to wash your hands.

[5 : 58] In terms of this virus that we're facing, you better be washing your hands. We all need you to wash your hands. But Jesus here isn't dealing with the issue of hygiene, and really, neither are the Pharisees.

That's not what they're concerned about. Their concern is that the disciples and Jesus are neglecting the tradition of the elders by neglecting ceremonial hand washing.

And so the issue here is a tradition, a ceremony, a religious ceremony, as it were, that was being done before people would eat. And ceremonial hand washing was something that was introduced by the scribes and Pharisees many years ago.

And in the tradition of the elders, there was a great concern for the obedience of certain of the stipulations in the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. So this, if we give the benefit of the doubt, we can say, this practice may well have begun because people were eager to obey God's law.

They wanted to obey those stipulations that are there in the Old Testament. And one of those stipulations says that if you were to come into contact with something which was unclean, you, therefore, were unfit for worship before God.

[7 : 06] You were unclean until you had been ceremonially purified. And so you had to go through this whole purification rite. And through the purification rite, you were, after doing that, you were ready again to serve the Lord in worship.

Now somewhere along the line, the Pharisees began to think through this and say, well, you know, it may happen that someone in the course of the day is going around and they're doing their, their daily things. Maybe they're in the marketplace and they might accidentally touch a food that's unclean and not know it.

Well, then their ceremony unclean didn't realize it. Now the issue here was always with the worship of God. But in this instance, their concern was, and then what if they, what if they ate food?

Well, there's nothing that really deals with that in terms of God's law. Well, but what, what if they go ahead and eat without yet making purification? Or maybe another example was the filthy Gentiles, the unbelievers.

What if you accidentally bumped into an unbeliever in the marketplace and made yourself unclean? I think, again, there's just no way I, my wife and I were talking about that.

[8 : 10] Maybe God has a sense of humor because, can you imagine picking a text like this for, in light of all we've been talking about, you accidentally touch unclean food. Maybe someone sneezed on it, or they coughed on it, or you bump into someone who's unclean with a virus.

And so, maybe in a lot of ways this relates to what we can imagine. But, the Pharisees were concerned that perhaps you could become unclean. And so, they invented a new practice. Instead of going to the temple and going through the purification rite that God had prescribed, they made up this thing called ceremonial washing.

And so, the ceremonial washing involved you holding your hands upward in the right position, and then they had to be washed, there had to be water that was dripped on it, it had to go down over your wrist, down into your sleeve, and there was no process, and it had to be done three times in the course of the meal.

Well, of course, this is nonsense. This is man-made religion. This has nothing to do with what God had prescribed. Maybe originally it was meant to protect them from being unclean, but they then made it into a law that everyone had to do this.

Of course, that's not what God had commanded. So, before you come to sit down for a meal, maybe you've been defiled, they came up with a solution, that you wash your hands in this way, and that's what's spoken of here.

[9 : 30] The disciples weren't doing that. In fact, it's possible that they could have actually been washing their hands for the sake of hygiene, but not doing the ceremonial washing in the proper way that's caused the Pharisees to be, and scribes to be so upset about this.

But the point I want you to see is that this was not from God. This was a tradition that was being taught by men. And this tradition was being regarded as equal to the word of God.

To break the tradition was to violate God's law, it was to go against God, and therefore be somehow in sin in doing this. And so what they were imposing on their fellow men were new religious obligations.

With all the issues of conscience that can go with that, all the guilt that can come with such religious stipulations. And I think it's fair for me to say that this is just legalism.

I know legalism gets thrown around a lot, the term these days, and maybe it's not real clear what legalism is, but what's presented to us here is really pure legalism. Instead of seeking out of the heart to obey the law of God, they then present some new thing that you have to do to be right with God.

[10 : 39] And so then we judge one another by the standard of, do you do this additional thing? And so today even there are many examples of this, and maybe we'll talk more about this as we go along.

But what we have here is really just a form of legalism. The Pharisees have added new law to God's law, and if you don't do it exactly the way that they do it, then obviously you don't measure up.

You're not really right with God. You're somehow in sin. And so in verses 3 through 9, we see Jesus' reply to these Pharisees, and really his critique of their teaching.

The Pharisees had attacked the disciples for breaching the tradition of the elders. And Jesus responded in the exact parallel way. So they're arguing, look, you've broken the law of the Pharisees, the tradition of the Pharisees.

Jesus' response is, why do you break the commandments of God? And so in a one-to-one ratio, an exact parallel, Jesus says, or the Pharisees say, you've broken the traditions of man.

[11 : 38] And Jesus says, you've broken the law of God. Now which one weighs heavier, and how should we judge these things? And so he then illustrates this by comparing God's commandment in verse 4 with the teaching of the elders.

God had commanded that we should honor our father and our mother. But the Pharisees have taught this thing. It's really complicated, but in verse 5, it's described for us a little bit.

Look there with me. But you say, if anyone tells his father or his mother, what you would have gained from me is given to God. This was called the rule of Corbin. And the rule of Corbin, as it was taught by them, was that a person could claim that something was given to God.

If someone else asked for it, they wouldn't have to give it to them. They wouldn't have to offer it up to them. In particular, you see Jesus making mention of father and mother. And the idea was that a child, an adult child in particular, at a later age when their parents might need financial assistance or some help, a way of honoring your father and mother would be to help them out when there's that kind of need.

But instead of doing that, some children were saying, oh, you need money? Well, look, I've committed this money to God. I've given this over to God. And therefore, I can't give it to you.

[12 : 53] It would be wrong for me to give it to you. And yet, they somehow were still free to spend the money or use the food or whatever else it might be for their own purpose. And so in that way, they invented this false offering to God.

I'm going to give God something, but I'm not actually giving it to God. I'm not taking it to the temple. It's not a sacrifice. I'm not giving it to the priest, but I can't give it to you. And so really, what this was was a selfish lie.

They invented a way that they could selfishly lie and make it look very spiritual. Again, I think this is something probably all of us could relate to today. Ways that we justify our own selfishness for religious reasons.

We say it's because we're honoring God when in fact, we've given no thought to how we're honoring God in that situation. And so the Pharisees have invented this tradition and Jesus is pointing out that this is actually breaking the law of God.

And what he wants us to see is not just here's one instance where this is done, but really he wants us to see that this is how we often treat God. We give God what's left over.

[14 : 03] We give him what's not inconvenient for us to give up. We're only willing to offer up to God what's convenient for us. And so the same is true here with this law of Corbin. They just made it into a law.

We don't really call it a law. We just justify it mentally. But they've made it into a law where they can only give their parents or offer up to someone in need what is convenient for them to give up.

Stuff they didn't need. I think maybe of the idea of you've seen people do food drives before. Canned food items. And you look at the canned food and oftentimes there's spam and there's the canned tuna, the stuff that someone maybe they bought at one point thought they'd eat and tasted and thought, I'm never eating that.

And they give it up because they think, I didn't want it anyway. And so in the same way this law of Corbin was meant as a selfish way for them to keep what they want to keep and not have to give up what they valued most.

And so the point is that their additions to the word of God has nullified the word of God for them. They may null and void the word of God. In particular, this commandment that God's given to honor your father and mother.

[15 : 05] And Jesus illustrates the reasons why they are doing this is because their hearts are not right. Look at verses 8 and 9. This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. And so as we talk about man-made religion we try to assess it. This is how we would assess man-made religion.

It looks like it's legitimate. It looks like it's honoring to God. They give lip service to God. We worship God. But the truth of the reality is that the heart is far from them.

And so the distinguishing characteristic that we're already seeing in this passage is the heart. Where's the heart? And so Jesus knowing the heart of the Pharisees is saying you've made this law to make it look like you want to obey God but that's not it at all.

Your heart isn't really worshiping God at all. And so in all likelihood though it's not specifically spelled out this law was presented so that there could be a form of legalism.

[16 : 07] So that people might look good before others. So they might have a ground by which they could judge others and say well you don't measure up to me look what I do. And again there are probably many ways that we do this today.

That we imagine that if someone doesn't do what we do that they're not as spiritual as we are. Or that we feel that we do things out of guilt because we think that's what makes us right before God.

And Jesus is exposing that although this looks like worship it's vain worship. It doesn't really worship God at all. So they're not moved from the heart to do it.

And so Jesus rightly calls this hypocrisy. Look at verse 7. You hypocrites well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said what I just read in verses 8 and 9. And so he calls them hypocrites.

And again here's another word that gets thrown around a lot. Hypocrites or hypocrisy. What is hypocrisy? Well we see here a clear example of hypocrisy. They're going through all the outward motions of the ceremonial worship but the whole thing is empty.

[17 : 13] I think again as we talk about worshiping God in different ways today and how things look different today we're preaching today to an empty sanctuary. But there also could be times in which a sanctuary could be completely full and yet be empty of worship because they worship God in vain.

It's all lip service it's not really from the heart. And so what we're taught even today is that worship is an issue of the heart. I'm getting a little bit into what true religion is but let's just say false religion is a religion in which the heart's not in it.

It's going through the motions it's faking it it's maybe even looking really religious doing maybe even the right things maybe rightly obeying God's commandments but for all the wrong reasons doing it without the heart.

Again it's just legalism. And so my question for you today is do you sometimes play at religion? Do you sometimes pretend to be religious? Do you sometimes pretend to be worshiping God when God's not there in your heart or mind at all?

Maybe an example of this is when we sing hymns at church. Do you sometimes sing God's praises with your lips while your heart's far from Him? You're thinking about other things you're contemplating when the service might be over or what time dinner is or what's waiting for you at work on Monday or concerns about the coronavirus I mean all these things could be going through your mind and you're not really worshiping God at all.

[18 : 36] You're singing the song it sounds like people outside may look and say look they're singing the hymn. Obviously they believe these things to be true of God. Maybe another way of asking that even again in relation to the hymns is how often do you really give thought to the words you're saying?

Maybe a hymn's so familiar to you you know all the words you sing it and don't really think about what it is you're affirming and are we doing it just by our lips? Maybe there are ways we can do this even in praying.

There are ways we do this even in showing up for church on Sundays. God's commanded us that we ought to gather together to worship but do we sometimes do it for all the wrong reasons because we think we're supposed to or because we know people are watching or because they're afraid the pastor will call me if I don't show up.

All these things are false in this vain worship of God. So what is true religion? Well Jesus doesn't leave it there he teaches us what true religion and true worship is.

Look at verses 10 and 11 he shows us there that the source of the problem is internal and he called the people to him and said to them hear and understand it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person but what comes out of the mouth that defiles him.

[19 : 48] So Jesus is saying our defilement comes from within and we see this again explained in more detail in verses 18 through 20. Jesus says there but what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and this defiles a person for out of the heart come evil thoughts and Jesus really goes through the list of the second table of the law the commandments 5 through 10.

he says evil thoughts murder adultery sexual immorality theft false witness slander these are what defile a person but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone and what Jesus is getting at here is that the issue is always the heart it's not about what we eat or even what goes on on the outside it's what's in the heart sin is not something that's superficial or external I know sometimes we talk about sin as if it's something that we do outside of ourselves but what Jesus is saying is sin is an issue of the heart the actions that we do proceed from the sin that's already there so doing the thing doesn't defile us we can think of any number of sin he's listed several of them sexual immorality we think of things like the issues of pornography or fornication adultery the act itself isn't what defiles us the reality is the defilement is already in our hearts we've sinned long before we commit the act and so Jesus is saying what we need is not better behavior what we need is not legalism that we look good to other people what we need is our hearts to be changed by God so Jesus' concern is with the heart and so likewise in terms of true religion what makes us holy is not what's outside it's not our behavior holiness is an issue of the heart good behavior will naturally flow from a heart that's good a tree produces the kind of fruit that's in accordance with the kind of tree it is and so

Jesus has said in the parables before that you can know a tree by the fruit and so Jesus is saying something very similar here now what is a heart I know recently I was preaching through this and someone asked me you know you say a lot about the heart but you don't really define it so here's my intent what is the heart well the heart here refers to the seat of our mind our where our thoughts come from originate it refers to our conscience our will our desires and to some extent even our affections now as I say affections I'd say the heart is more than emotions I think in in our day and age in our time in America when we say the heart we tend to speak of emotions right when we think of the heart we think of the Hallmark Channel or something that's not what Jesus is speaking of here it may include the affections the emotions that overflow out of that heart but it's more than just the emotions in fact in the Bible often times heart and soul are used interchangeably and so it goes into our innermost being all that we are inside what defines who we are is what we're speaking of in the heart and what Jesus is saying is that the heart must be changed it has to be regenerated made new before a person can willingly obey God and so the issue for the Pharisees they outwardly are obeying the law they look good on the outside but as Jesus said before they're whitewashed tombs they're dead inside their heart has not been renewed and so they're not truly worshiping God even though it looks good so true religion true worship true holiness proceed from the heart it is a holiness that is from the inside out and it characterizes all our life our life reflects that's what's true from the inside that's the kind of holiness that Jesus is seeking that's the kind of worship that he wants that's what true religion is a religion that proceeds from the heart and is genuine in its worship of God

J.C. Ryle said this what is the first thing that we need in order to be a Christian he answers a new heart what is the sacrifice that God asks us to bring to him a broken and contrite heart what is the true circumcision the circumcision of the heart what is genuine obedience to obey from the heart what is saving faith to believe from the heart to believe with the heart where ought Christ to dwell to dwell in our hearts by faith what is the chief request that wisdom makes to everyone my son give me your heart and so we see all throughout the issue really is the heart and that's what Jesus is driving at in this passage and so Jesus warns his disciples against the Pharisees and other such false teachers he says that they are plants the father has not planted and they will be rooted up now if you've been here for our services and have been through the preaching of Matthew maybe that rang a bell with you do you realize what Jesus is speaking of here he says that they are plants the father has not planted and that they will be rooted up now I think if you've been here and you followed with us through Matthew your mind ought to automatically be drawn to the kingdom parables think in chapter 13 what we saw the kingdom parables in particular the parable of the wheat and the tares in the parable of the wheat and the tares we see that we have the people who are working for the master they go out and they plant the crop and the enemy comes and he plants weeds there in the field and as these things grow they're impossible to be identified one from the other we talked about what tares were but Jesus makes clear that at the end of the age the reapers will come he says these are the angels and they will come and they will gather together all of these things from out of the kingdom and the ones that Jesus or the farmers have not planted they will be cast into the lake of fire they will be eternally damned into hell and so what Jesus is saying here and it's thinly veiled but it's there

Jesus is saying all who the father didn't plant are going to be plucked up he's saying the Pharisees are unregenerate they have not been saved their heart their heart's wrong because their heart has never been changed and they're going to be cast into hell and so he warns them don't follow such teachers be on guard against such people and so this is what Jesus is speaking of here in that parable and then he says that they're blind guides leading the blind and that they will both fall into a pit again they are headed for hell and they're taking others with them this is what Jesus means by the pit often hell is referred to in that kind of way the devil will be cast into that pit forever and so likewise there's this warning here that they're blind guides and where are they leading people well they're leading people to hell that's where they're taking them now he says this about the Pharisees and these were considered the most religious people in Jesus' day they were the ones that people thought would be the most religious yet he's saying they're headed to hell and everyone who falls in them is headed for hell and so he's warning his disciples here that false doctrine false teaching kills not physically but kills eternally spiritually it's deadly it's like the blind leading the blind false doctrine leads us in the false way of living bad doctrine will lead to bad practice and Jesus is very concerned that his disciples not be affected by the false teaching of the Pharisees and so what we see here is that true worship is from the heart the nature of true religion is the engagement of the heart the engagement of our whole being in its deepest and most fundamental level with God a worship that springs up from inside of us it's not just lip service it's not mere obedience it's not outward attendance it's not just physical presence at maybe we could say the means of grace but the involvement of the whole heart in the worship of God and so we need to remember that as we go to

[28 : 18] God in worship that it's an issue of our hearts and are our hearts engaged are we worshipping God from the heart and so too I just want to encourage you today that there's a way that we can still be worshipping God even from home it's not the same it's not the worship service that God's prescribed we want to be careful we're not forsaking the assembly of the saints but we believe that we're being careful today to follow the guidelines of our government we want to love our neighbor and so we're doing things a little different but I want to encourage you that if your heart today is engaged with God if you're listening to the sermon and you're worshipping God in the midst of it that's still worship you can still worship God even though we're not able to gather together to corporately do that and that's not to say we're not missing something we are church is something special these elements are all important but God's called us to worship him in all of our life and so where's our heart as we go about our deeds throughout the day throughout the week there are ways in which we can do things that look really good but are completely devoid of any true worship of God and likewise there may be things that people can't see the good in but if your heart's there and you're worshipping God then that is an act of worship so let me make just a few points in application for us let me ask you today are you more concerned about man-made customs than you are the very commands or the word of God are you more worried about what other people think or what they say or what rules they may make than you are the word of God do we long for and desire for the truth of the word so that by God's grace it might transform our lives from the inside out do we want the word of God to change us if we do then we have the spirit of true disciples that's what defines what a true disciple is a true follower of Jesus is one who wants the truth to change them they're less worried about what they look like and more about pleasing their heavenly father about worshipping him about loving him in their hearts secondly I think this teaches us that we don't need more laws what we need is a heart of holiness right as human beings we're great at making laws even for the right reasons maybe because we want to worship God rightly but we can invent all kind of rules and laws and we judge other people by them and we judge ourselves by them but what we need is not more laws we need a heart of holiness a heart of love for God the scribes and Pharisees stress on the merely external forms of holiness had led them to neglect the most important element of the internal heart they went to him as accusers not as students and disciples just consider that they walked

I saw some estimates 100 miles they traveled to confront Jesus where he was if they came from Jerusalem as it seems to be the case they travel 100 miles to confront Jesus and point out his disciples are sinners and yet they don't come to him to ask why help us understand teach us that we too might become disciples they're not students of God they're not students of the word they're accusers and so too we need to be on guard against such things what we need is a holiness that comes from the heart that impacts every area of our life a godliness that flows from our inmost being and impacts our thoughts our words and all our actions it's not as though we're saying we ought not live in ways that are right and honoring to God we should but that ought to flow out of our love for God not out of a need to obey the law for the sake of men or to impress others so again that point was do we need excuse me we don't need more laws we need a heart of holiness and we need to be mindful of that third the Pharisees remained in their spiritual endurance because they rejected

Jesus' teaching and they were not willing to go to him and to his word and submit their teaching to it as I said earlier they went to him as accusers not as students or disciples the disciples were brought out of their spiritual ignorance because they went to Christ and they confessed their ignorance and they asked him to instruct their minds their hearts their consciences by the word look at verse 15 but Peter said to him explain the parable to us they didn't get it either God's law was clear that there were unclean foods that if you eat them they would defile you Jesus what are you talking about it's not the food that defiles us and of course without going into great detail Jesus is in his person his fulfillment of the law he's doing away with the ceremonial law although obviously he's upholding the ten commandments here the moral law of God but he's doing away with the ceremonial law but they don't get it at this point what do you mean it's not the food that defiles you but they go to God and say teach me I want to understand I want to obey and honor you from the heart and so we see that distinction between them and the Pharisees

John Calvin said a teachable spirit is the first mark of a regenerate soul so how do we identify someone who's a Christian he says well one of the first marks is that they're willing to be taught they go to God as a student they want to learn they want to be changed by the word so how do we respond when we come to teaching of the word that we don't like there's probably often times things we come across that we think oh that's really hard that's going to make life a lot more difficult how do we respond when that happens are we willing to submit to God are there ways in which we despise having to do we obey the command strictly out of duty or with a cold heart or because we're afraid our family might see us or other people at church might know we're not doing it the way the Bible says and so I've got to do this or is it because I truly love God and this is what God's saying I ought to do this means this is the most blessed position

I can be in obedience to God means blessing for I want to obey God from the heart is that true of you today is our tendency to ignore the things we don't like in God's word is there tendency to reject them or to even change the word and our tendency to submit to the word even where we don't understand it or excuse me is our tendency to submit to the word of God even where it's hard when we don't understand it when we don't like what it has to say I think you've heard stories maybe it's Benjamin Franklin who was a deist but I've heard stories of people reading through the Bible and tearing out the parts they don't like and it's not long before you're not left with very much word of God at all the true Christian submits their life to God out of love for God it's their delight it comes from the heart fourthly how do we view worship well I think worship can be thought of as a series of acts or words that are performed in obedience to biblical commands or maybe the tradition of our denomination our church or our association of churches we think this is how they always did it maybe in our branches this is what reformed people do we need to be on guard against that all of this can be called worship but all this can also be done with a heart that's far from God and be false and not be true and genuine worship and so really

[35 : 54] I want to end on this final point just encouraging us from a few passages from the word of God Psalm 51 the sacrifice is acceptable to God is a broken spirit a broken and contrite heart oh God you will not despise God doesn't despise the broken heart Psalm 42 1-2 that we read earlier at the very beginning as a deer pants for flowing streams so pants my soul for you oh God my soul thirsts for God for the living God here's an example of what true worship is a soul that thirsts for God a soul that longs for God like a deer pants for flowing streams again Psalm 73 verses 25 through 26 whom have I in heaven but you and there's nothing on earth I desire besides you my flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever is that true of you today is God your portion forever is there nothing on earth you desire more than God

I think maybe this time that we're living in right now is a great time to ask that question I think a lot of us are going without some of the things we really like maybe we're having to stay home we can't do all the same things we once did but the question really for us is do we have what we most desire think of Paul's words he counts everything else as rubbish compared to knowing Christ Jesus is Lord have we counted everything else in this world in this life as rubbish compared to knowing Christ Jesus do we believe that a quarantine a virus or whatever else can take away everything else we have but if we still have Christ we have all that our heart desires is that where we're finding our true joy are there not ways that we can be encouraged in this week maybe even in the month ahead of us to find joy in Christ even when other things seem to be taken away from us to let Christ be our all to find joy in God so true worship which delights in God is a drawing near to God with the heart the heart that draws near to God and that's what

Jesus wants us to see today but I want you to understand that we're only obtained this by the grace of the Holy Spirit if you don't have this today what we need is a change of the heart and if you're a Christian today your heart's been changed there are ways we need our heart to be renewed every day that we may find our joy in God and in God alone and that we may offer him to worship that delights in him from the heart let's pray together dearly father we so thank you for your word we pray that it would be an encouragement to us today that our hearts would be affected by the truth of your word that we would be drawn near to you Lord that you would even expose in all of us the ways in which our worship of you can be false our obedience be false it stemmed from a heart that's not change that's hard that's doing it for all the wrong reasons Lord help us to evaluate what is our motivation in all that we do and Lord we pray that we would honor you that we would give you glory from the heart we pray this in Christ's name amen