(Untitled) Sinfulness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 July 2003

Preacher: Canon David Short

[0:00] Let's bow our heads and pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we ask now as we look at the words of Jesus Christ, your Son, that your Holy Spirit would create clean hearts in us and renew a right spirit within us.
And we ask this for the glory of your name. Amen. Well now, I wonder if you would take your Bible, please, and open it to Matthew chapter 15, on page 15.
And as you do so, I want to follow up the mission that we had last week and just challenge you. Next year, it would be a very good idea if a number of you took a week's holiday and came and helped out with that camp.
It's a remarkable time. So if you take a week off work, it would be a brilliant model to your family and children and you would be able to invest in something that has tremendous impact in the lives of the children.
[1:22] Many of the children who came do not come to church. And it was a wonderful time. So I want to commend that to you. Matthew chapter 15. Now, I do not think it is ever possible to get used to how radical and revolutionary Jesus' teaching is.

He keeps saying things that are frankly unacceptable to us, particularly on this lovely, sunny July day.
And the things that Jesus said scandalised the people who first heard him and continue to scandalise people today and they forced the hearer to ask the question, just who does he think he is?
And last week, we began a series in Matthew 15 to 18. You remember, the scribes and Pharisees had come up from Jerusalem to Galilee because Jesus was teaching his disciples to not obey certain ancient traditions.
Look down at verse 6. For the sake of your tradition, Jesus says, you have made void the word of God.
[2:34] You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

These words are crystal clear and entirely unpalatable. Jesus draws a line between the word of God on one side and the traditions of men on the other.
And he says our constant temptation is to use the traditions to reject and to make empty the word of God. Very interesting, isn't it? That Jesus is entirely reverent toward the word of God, but when it comes to the traditions of men, he simply dismisses them as the rules of men.
And we spent a little time last week shining the light of this scripture on a number of the traditions that we have at St. John's. What I did not mention last week is the fact that the current Anglican way of setting aside God's word is by synods.
And we make majority votes and it doesn't really matter what the word of God says because the majority vote becomes policy and that sets the tradition for the 21st century.
[3:54] And you can dismiss the Bible, but if you dismiss the tradition, you'll be in significant hot water. Now, I didn't want to do all this passage last week because I thought it might give you spiritual indigestion, but I want to come back to it this week.

It's very important that we go deeper here. We need to see why it is that the finest traditions cannot touch the human heart. Why it is that we can worship God sincerely with our mouths while our hearts be light years away from him.
And the answer is very simple. If you would look down at verse 10, please. He called the people to him and said to them, Hear and understand, not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

comes out of the mouth this defiles a man.
And then over to verse 16. And he said to them, Are you still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and so passes on?
But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.
[5:19] These are what defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man. Here is Jesus at his most radical, diagnosing the human condition.

And it is drastically different from what the teachers, the religious teachers of Jesus' day thought and taught, which is why they're highly offended in verse 16. And it is drastically different than what most of us believe and what we're taught to believe today.
And it is a hideous diagnosis, don't you agree? If Jesus is right, it means that every life born into this world has a heart capable of evil thoughts, murder, adultery, and the rest of the list.
And that is why Jesus puts such a heavy emphasis on understanding. He says in verse 10, Hear and understand. In verse 16, Are you still without understanding? Because even teaching this to the disciples cuts across what they want to believe and contradicts them.
And my prayer this morning is that God might open our minds so that we might understand something of what Jesus means here. Because if we do so, it will help us to think differently about our lives and differently about the world in which we live.
[6:38] It will explain why so many people find the good news of God in Jesus Christ as irrelevant. It will explain how wonderful and how radical the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is.

This is the A, B, C of Christianity this morning. You cannot understand Jesus' gospel. You cannot be a Christian without this. If this is not true, if these words are not true, Christianity is not true. Easter and Christmas are pointless. And the idea at heart is very simple. Jesus wants us to understand that the source of evil in this world is your heart and my heart.
It's so important. Jesus says it three times. In verse 11, he says, it's what comes out. In verse 18, it's what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart.
Verse 19, out of the heart come evil thoughts. The source of evil is not outside us, says Jesus.
[7:50] It's inside us. Our real problem is not a lack of education. It's not a lack of money. It is our own inner being. It is my inner being that is the source of evil.

It is my heart that defiles me and makes me unlovely to the holy God that breaks friendship and fellowship and twists my mind and my personality and my conscience.
This is not a philosophical issue. This is an intensely practical issue. And therefore, I want for the rest of our time together to just spell out some implications of what Jesus is saying.
And I do hope that you go home and spell out many more. I just want to mention four. And you can write me a letter and spell out some others if you wish.
The first is this. This is what Christianity has always taught. Don't you find it interesting that it is Jesus Christ who most seriously insists on original sin?
[8:57] It's not the Apostle Paul who invented this. Christians have always believed this, that we are not basically good at heart and every now and again we occasionally sin is that we are by nature sinners and we cannot help sinning.

We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners. Now let me demonstrate this for you. I wonder if you'd pull out the wine-coloured prayer book from the seat in front of you and turn to page 702.
Article 9, which most of you know off by heart. Article 9, which most of you know off by heart. Article 9, which most of you know off by heart. Article 9, of original sin.
Let me read part of this to you. Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam. In other words, not as we do what those people have done before as the Pelagians do vainly talk, but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every person that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man, woman and child is very far gone from original righteousness and is of their own nature inclined to evil so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit.
And therefore, in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated.
[10:48] Now, in our culture, sin, you only find the word sin on dessert menus. You measure sin by calories today. What the book of Common Prayer does is it distinguishes between sins and sin.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And the problem for us is not so much that we do bad things, but that we are bad at heart. It's not that I'm missing some virtue. It is that I have a spiritual disease, this infection that remains, yea, in them that are regenerated.
It's not that I make bad decisions. It's not that I'm selfish. But that it is my very nature that is pitted against God. That is why you can't be an Anglican unless you are sinful.
The thing that we do every service is we confess our sin every time we meet. That is why we say there is no health in us. That we can do nothing good without thee.
Or as we prayed in the collect this morning, it's God who gives us a hearty desire to pray. Sin is not really a moral issue so much as it is a spiritual issue.
[12:08] In our hearts we reject and we distort the truth of God. It's not just selfishness but lawlessness. It breaks the law of God. It smears my relationship with God.

It grieves and it separates and it betrays. It is profoundly anti. It is anti-righteousness and anti-spirit and anti-God and anti-life. And this is what Christians have always believed.
After the 8 o'clock service a gentleman came out at the door and spoke to me. He said, in 60 years I have never heard anything like what you said this morning. Now he came from another denomination that is true and frankly he was relieved to hear it.
But I want to say to you this is what Christians have always believed. Let's go back into the Old Testament for a moment. Keep your finger in Matthew 15 and turn back to Jeremiah 17 on page 681.
Jeremiah 17 verse 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt.
[13:32] Who can understand it? I sometimes am tempted to read verses like this at the beginning of our service but I'm not sure they would lead well into the first hymn. I can't see into your heart and you can't see into mine thankfully but God can and he sees our hearts as devious and desperately sick that we are the source of our own pollution and uncleanness that the fountain of corruption and evil in the world is within me and within you that there is no sin in this world that has not first arisen within my heart that we are not all innocent.

Let's go back to Psalm 51 and left to page 501 Psalm 51 verse 5 David says behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me he's committed adultery and he's committed murder to cover up the adultery and he is not blaming his mother or excusing himself he is saying that my corruption and guilt are deeper than those isolated acts in fact I was acting according to my nature that is my character he says when we are born we inherit from our parents what they inherited from theirs the tendency to think and speak and do evil it doesn't matter if you are brought up on a desert island without any contamination with culture it doesn't matter if you are brought up under the best education system with the best of tutors nobody has to teach us to lie and to cheat and to steal it's true we are all made in the image of God and because the good God made us there is so much in our life that is good and wonderful but we are not good at heart we are like the most brilliantly made golden watch that never runs on time what Christians have always believed now I think you'll guess the second implication and that is that we will do almost anything to deny what Jesus says here and if you if you want to test this out try talking about this in public our world and our culture is enraged with the idea that there is such a thing as original sin or that evil might come from within me it doesn't matter what discipline you study it is axiomatic that I am good and that evil is outside me and the reason is very simple because it's the nature of evil to deny and suppress the truth so within myself
I have this force at work that is tranquilizing me and deceiving myself and ever since the Garden of Eden the primary tactic when we know that we have done something wrong the primary way of dealing with guilt is to say he did it or she did it you remember when God comes to Adam he says the woman you gave me she gave to me and I ate and God turns to Eve and she says the snake he gave me he beguiled me if you go to university today you will learn that evil is not within but it is external it comes from a lack of education or ignorance or from social deprivation or poverty and it's not really called evil anymore it's only badly adjusted behaviour or bad choices but the idea that I am bad at heart is utterly and impossibly repudiated this week two teenagers in North Carolina took a rifle and began firing it into traffic along the highway a 45 year old
Canadian man was driving with a friend he was hit with a bullet and instantly killed when the boys were arrested and brought before the judge the father said and I quote our boys are good kids that made a very bad judgment we have been so become so proficient at laying off guilt that we've made an art form out of victimhood some years ago in New Orleans two men hatched a plan to

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

make money from life insurance fraud it's a true story one of them scouted courted and married a young woman on their honeymoon he coaxed her out for a walk in the street at night maneuvered her into a prearranged position pushed her into the street where his accomplice ran her over and killed her and then he infiled an insurance claim against this hit and run driver when they were caught their main line of defense was the fact that the police had kept interfering with their lives as they investigated them and pursued them and interrogated and charged them that it was they who were the real victims and that instead of being punished they should be rewarded this is the message of our culture and it is preached with absolute self-certainty by the
Canadian music industry in Sarah McLaughlin's song Adia she sermonizes by saying we are born innocent believe me Adia we are still innocent in fact she goes on I can show you all the beauty you possess if you'd only let yourself believe we are all innocent believe me and I think becoming a Christian involves being sceptical about the world's view of evil Jesus could not be clearer out of the heart come evil thoughts the third implication has to do with the betterment of society what is the great problem that stands in the way today of progress and freedom and peace what is it that blocks the best attempts of governments and non-government organisations to eliminate oppression poverty and violence the answer is Jesus words in verse 19 human nature as Jesus sees it it is because we are sinful and of course
[20:22] Jesus words include every single person and I think this is one of the basic problems for political ideologies on both the right wing and the left wing they see a problem in the world but the problem is in the human nature of everybody else when I went to university Marxism was the all the rage we all had to read dust capital and walk around with a battered copy under our arms or else we wouldn't be allowed in certain places and the human nature that is rotten in dust capital is that of the wealthy bourgeoisie you and me those who control the modes of production in the 20th century the right wing philosophies fastened on evil in the immigrant those who don't belong to a master race but the reason why both Marxism and Nazism collapsed is because of what Jesus says here and now it has been replaced in academic circles by postmodernism which says

I don't have a fixed human nature I can define my nature by the choices I make G.K. Chesterton the famous author was very good on this issue I think he said this is the only thing that Christians believe that is empirically provable you can't prove creation and you can't prove the resurrection but this you can prove and the way you do it is trying to disprove it the London Times ran a series of articles about social problems and each article finished with the question what is wrong with the world and Chesterton wrote famous letter dear editor what's wrong with the world I am faithfully yours G.K.
Chesterton every government that's ever been elected or put in power has ended its days in disappointment and disillusionment because you can mould political structures and social structures and economic structures but you cannot mould human nature and this is much too strong meat for delicate minds today for the liberal optimist or for the spiritual sentimentalist I mean who does Jesus think that he is I think that's the point until we recognise our true nature we will never pay attention to Jesus Christ and that leads me to the fourth implication very simply that these words are profoundly full of hope I think we should be very thankful this morning that the one who tells us this is Jesus Christ I mean don't you think it would be a cruel statement from him if he told us this truth without any intention of helping us the reason he tells us is because of his love it's because he has come from heaven as the prince of peace bringing healing in his wings and Christians have always measured the truth of these words by what it cost Jesus to bring that healing to us if Jesus is right if this radical diagnosis is true what we need is a new heart and a new nature something God alone can give something no amount of education no amount of social rearrangement no amount of religious tradition can do for us it's nothing more than salvation from sin if you stand back from
Matthew's gospel you will know when the gospel begins the angel comes to Joseph and says you shall call the baby's name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins and when you come to chapter 9 Jesus declares I have authority to forgive sins when you come to chapter 11 the words I read at the beginning of the service come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you he says because I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls you read on in the gospel you come to the night before he was betrayed when Jesus took the wine and blessed and he said this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sin only the power of God can give us a new heart and only the death of Jesus

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Christ can cleanse our heart only the spirit of God can renew us and remake us and the question I want to ask you this morning is this do you agree with Jesus do you think he's right I mean do you think he is talking about you and me it's true that we need a deep cleansing from him because if he is right then we need to call upon God that he would create a clean heart within us that he would renew a right spirit within us this is what he has promised to do in Jesus Christ and as we come forward today to receive the reminders of his death cry out to God for his forgiveness and grace for this is why Jesus Christ came let us kneel and pray please open your prayer books to page 39 renewing restoring
[26:32] God we thank you for all your work in your world and in our lives thank you that you have the power to reclaim darkened and shattered hearts thank you marriage and and and and wonders Thank you.

Peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it. Thank you.
War rajuri ■ars. the world. For Canterbury and for the based on scripture.
Pray for the meeting of the evangelicals and the Anglican communion. Preserve truth.
Pray for the Anglican church in developing countries. Thank you. Persecution.
[29:10] Persecution. Persecution. Persecution. Pray for our own leaders. Persecution.

Persecution. Persecution. Persecution. Persecution.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host