

## INTRODUCE

Good morning! Welcome to Fathom Church on this Memorial Day weekend. Hello and welcome to those of you streaming online. We're glad you joined us this morning as well.

If you're newer to Fathom, my name is Eric Shelly and I *am not* the lead pastor of Fathom, I am one of the elders here at the church.

- Our lead pastor's name is Chris Martin.
- Chris and his family are on sabbatical this summer.
- I believe Chris was in Oregon visiting some friends this past week.
- And we continue to pray that their sabbatical is restful and fruitful for them.

Before we get started this morning, I wanted to take some time to pray about some of the events that occurred in our country in the past few weeks, namely the shootings in Buffalo, NY and Uvalde, TX

- Victims and families
- Those directly impacted, witnesses, policemen and first responders
- Politicians and lawmakers – put politics aside and move towards compromise and solutions
- Mental illness, sin, evil
- Christ as the only cure to it all

Ok, thanks for praying with me and we'll continue to lift up those communities in our prayers as well as seek out other ways where we can make a difference in those situations.

Well, this summer at Fathom, we're preaching through the gospel of Matthew,

- We're going to be in Matthew 15 today
- So, grab your Bibles if you brought them. If you didn't bring a Bible, there is one beneath every chair.
- Or feel free to bring it up in a bible app on a phone or tablet. If you're streaming online, click the bible icon and it will take you there as well

## INTRO: No Intro

- So, here's where we're going today:

- We're going to discuss this passage in Matthew 15:1-9
- That talks about traditions, commandments, hypocrisy, and worship
  - And there are a few things for us to unpack and explain
  - We're going to learn about some Jewish traditions like *Mishnah* and *corban* and what those things mean
- And then we're going to discuss how sometimes **our traditions** may tempt us to honor God **with our words only and not with our hearts**
- So, I'm calling today's sermon "**Traditionally Speaking**". So let's go...

## CONTEXT

We've been working our way through the **middle** of the book of Matthew. Chapters 14-17.

We've been working through the phase of Jesus' public ministry where he begins to face rejection.

- His public ministry has gained steam and gained popularity
- He is known throughout the region as a great teacher and healer and miracle worker
- Crowds of people are following him to hear him speak and see his mighty works
  - He's preaching and teaching to large groups of people – tens of thousands at a time
  - He's healing people wherever he goes
  - So, people are taking notice of Jesus and his ministry
- But whether its back in 30 AD or in 2022 AD, what typically happens when someone or something gains popularity
  - Is that criticism soon follows
  - People start to look into the popular person or trend or product
  - And they find issues with it, critiques of it
  - They begin to shape and form opinions on it
    - They write reviews on blogs
    - They tweet about it
  - Think about politicians or leaders who rise to some popularity
    - But then people start watching them more closely
    - And start digging into their backgrounds a bit more
    - And they see how they've voted or acted in the past
- And that is kind of what is happening here with Jesus and his ministry
  - He is very popular with the crowds
  - He is teaching them

- He is healing them
- He is becoming well-known and popular
- And naturally, as his popularity grows, he begins to face some criticism and some rejection
- Let's look at our passage for today. Matthew 15 verse 1

**Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,**

Before we get to what they say, let's talk about verse 1 as this verse sets some context for us.

- It's an easy verse to skip past. But contextually, its important.
- What's happening here is that while Jesus is going throughout the region of Galilee preaching and healing
- The religious leaders back at headquarters in Jerusalem
  - Are watching
  - and observing
  - and critiquing
- They're looking at Jesus and his disciples. They're listening and watching for an opportunity to undermine Jesus and his authority and popularity
  - They're looking for an opportunity to criticize him
  - Or prove him wrong
- And so, they send a delegation that was likely following Jesus and the disciples around
  - Listening to him preach
  - Watching him heal
  - Observing them while they ate
  - Watching everything Jesus did, in hopes of finding something to criticize and reject
- The text says both **Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus**
  - Which is noteworthy because
  - Pharisees and scribes were different groups of people
    - The had different roles in the Jewish religious culture at the time
    - They differed theologically
    - The Pharisees were focused on the Mosaic law and ensuring that everyone adhered to that law
    - The Scribes were more the teachers and interpreters of the law
    - Both had religious authority, but in some different ways

- This might be like a congressional representative and a state senator working together on a bill or something
  - They're similar in that they both represent people of their state
  - But they've got different roles
  - In different parts of the government
- Mathew's purpose in naming both of them
  - Is that even though they differed theologically in many ways
  - They came together
  - They joined forces here
  - Against Jesus
- That's the setting and the context for today's passage
  - The Pharisees and scribes
  - This task force sent from the Jewish religious headquarters in Jerusalem...
- They're looking at Jesus and his disciples and watching their every move
  - Just waiting for them to slip up
  - To do something wrong,
  - To do something regrettable or embarrassing in public where someone can film it on their smartphone and make it go viral
- They're just waiting for an opportunity to catch Jesus and his disciples in the act
  - To catch them red-handed
- And finally, in today's passage, they find something! They've got him!
  - They finally have a smoking gun they can use against Jesus

### **ACCUSATION – Not Following Tradition**

What is it? What's the smoking gun? Look at verse 2:

**2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat."**

So, after watching Jesus carefully and closely

- Just looking for a way to accuse him
- They come to him with... **Not washing your hands?**
- That's it. That's the religious scandal!
  - That's how they're going to cancel Jesus
  - That's like the social media post from 10 years ago that was never taken down
  - Or that's the regretful high school yearbook photo that they dug up

- In order to try to cancel Jesus, they accuse him of: ... not washing his hands?

What's going on here? Is this really a hygiene scandal? Let's unpack this a bit more.

- Do you remember when the pandemic started? There was a big focus on hygiene and cleanliness and washing your hands properly
  - Using soap and warm water
  - Washing for at least 20 seconds...
  - Palms, tops of your hands, between the fingers. Proper rinsing
  - We were kind of re-trained and re-focused on washing our hands regularly
  - This was a good thing, I think
- But this isn't what was going on here in our story
- The religious leaders weren't concerned with dirty hands or washing habits

### **EXPLAIN: Traditional Washing**

What was going on here is that the religious leaders and Jewish elders had these traditions<sup>1</sup>

- They were sacred and orthodox traditions
- Ceremonial practices, duties, and rituals
  - Things like washing your hands before you eat meat
  - Or washing your plates and cups and pots before each use
  - Sprinkling your table before you ate at it, or sprinkling your couch before sitting at it
  - ... things like that
- These traditions were passed down orally from one generation to another
- So, they had little to no basis in Old Testament law
- But the rabbis and teachers followed them religiously
- And they compiled all of these traditions in a collection called the *Mishna*
  - The Mishna said "*It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis, than to contradict Scripture itself*"
    - In other words
    - *Don't contradict Scripture... that's bad*
    - *But whatever you do...*

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<sup>1</sup> Info on Mishna (or Mishnah) and traditions from: Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 53). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books and Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [\*Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament\*](#) (pp. 59–60). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- *Don't contradict the teachings and traditions of the rabbis... that's even worse!*
- So, the religious teachers followed these traditions over and above the Word of God and the commandments of God
- That's why they were so upset
- That's why Jesus' disciples not washing their hands was so scandalous in the eyes of these leaders
  - It wasn't because their hands were dirty when they ate
  - It's because they **broke tradition**
  - They disobeyed the Mishna
- **Tradition was of utmost importance** to the religious leaders

### **ILLUSTRATION: Traditions Today**

Now, traditions are always an important part of society – whether it's in first century Israel or in 2022 North America

We do lots of things based on tradition. Look at some holiday traditions for example.

- Let's start with Thanksgiving
  - And Thanksgiving dinner
  - There are things that we eat for Thanksgiving dinner that we don't eat at any other meal throughout the year
  - Cranberry sauce, stuffing, even the turkey
  - To me, turkey is probably the most overrated of the Thanksgiving foods
    - Give me a ham, or a tenderloin any day
    - Turkey just isn't that strong of a main course
    - And it's a pain in the neck
      - You need to bring it home and thaw it for several days
      - And then you season it or brine it
      - And then you bake it, or fry it, or smoke it, or whatever method you choose
      - And then you need to carve it
      - And dispose of the bird carcass
      - And then you eat it and it makes you sleepy and groggy
      - And then you need to eat it at every meal for the next week because you have too many leftovers
    - And we do all of this not necessarily because turkey is some great culinary treat... but because its tradition

- Its tradition to eat turkey on Thanksgiving
  - But even if we didn't have turkey on Thanksgiving,
  - We could still celebrate the holiday, right?
- How about Easter and Easter eggs?
  - Obviously the weird, creepy bunny that delivers the eggs in a basket is a marketing thing
  - But the tradition of Easter eggs has some origins in early Christianity<sup>2</sup>
  - The egg symbolizes new life. Cracking the egg symbolizes Christ's resurrection from the sealed tomb
  - Easter eggs are a tradition
  - But Easter is still a reason to celebrate even if we don't dye a single egg
  - We can still celebrate Christ's resurrection without Easter eggs
- Or how about Christmas traditions?
  - My family has a handful of Christmas movies that we watch each year
  - Anne and I always watch some of the **true Christmas classics**
    - like *Christmas Vacation*
    - and *Die Hard*
  - And our daughters love movies like *Elf* and *The Grinch*
    - And about 30 other Christmas movies
  - But even if we cut the cord and cancelled our Netflix and didn't watch a single Christmas movie this year
    - It wouldn't prevent us from celebrating Christmas
  - Christmas would still be Christmas
  - if we didn't watch movies, or didn't exchange gifts, or didn't put up decorations, right?
  - Those things are all just traditions

I'm not criticizing traditions, here.

- Traditions are important.
- They are fun.
- Many of the holiday traditions point to Jesus and are symbolic of why we celebrate the holiday in the first place
  - Maybe not watching *Die Hard*
  - but most of the others
- **But traditions are not laws**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/kids/bring-christian-history-alive-through-easter-egg-traditions.html>

- They are not commands from God
- Scripture doesn't say 'Thou shalt put up a Christmas Tree'
- However, the religious leaders of Jesus' day were treating these traditions like that – like they were laws or commands from God
- They placed traditions above God's commands

Here's the thing about traditions. **Traditions are external** SLIDE

- We follow traditions externally, primarily for others to see
- Think again about our holiday traditions
  - The huge thanksgiving dinner spread on your table
  - Decorating Easter eggs
  - Giving each other Christmas gifts
  - Christmas decorations
- All of these things – again, they aren't necessarily bad things – but they are all done externally
- They are outward practices, outward rituals
- Done for others to see
- or done with others
- Traditions are external

### **APPLICATION: Our rituals**

Now, think about your own spiritual practices, or even those of our church:

- Are there any rituals that you find yourself doing more for others to see rather than for God to see?
- When we're singing, sometimes people will raise their hands or their arms
  - Ask yourself, am I doing this to express worship to God, my Creator?
  - Or are my arms up so others can see how deep and spiritual and worshipful I am? How much I love God?
- Or what about communion?
  - The Bible calls us to examine ourselves before celebrating the Lord's Supper, and if there is an issue between you and a brother or sister
  - To address that issue before coming to the communion table
  - Have you ever taken the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner...
  - because you're worried what others might think if you abstain?
  - *Did you see that Eric didn't take communion today? I wonder what's going on with him*
- There are church traditions and rituals today that we can follow...

- and completely miss their meaning because we're following them externally only

Here Jesus doesn't follow the external traditions of the Jewish elders and religious leaders.

- That's why they're critiquing him
- That's why they've come to accuse him

So, next Jesus is going to respond to their accusation. He actually responds with an accusation of his own. Let's look at verse 3

### **JESUS' RESPONSE – Not Following God's Commands**

<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.

Essentially, so far, this exchange can be summarized pretty briefly:

- The religious leaders accuse Jesus saying, "*You're breaking our traditions!*"
- And Jesus responds, "*Well, you're breaking God's commands.*"

### **EXPLAIN: 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

But let me explain what Jesus is saying and talking about here.

In verse 3, the commandment that Jesus is referring to is the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment.

- Back in Exodus 20, God gave Moses the 10 Commandments
- and the 5<sup>th</sup> one is to **Honor your father and your mother**
- We're familiar with this commandment, right?
- Parents pull this out of context to get their kids to listen to them all the time
  - *Now Johnny, the Bible says to honor your father and mother,*
  - *And we're telling you to eat your vegetables,*
  - *So, honor your parents and eat your broccoli!*
- We're familiar with the idea of respecting our parents, of honoring, obeying, and listening to them
- But the Bible takes this idea a step further
- Jesus also references laws from elsewhere in Exodus and Leviticus which state, **<sup>17</sup> "Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.** (Ex 21:17)
  - The idea here is that

- Honoring your father and mother is more than just obeying them
  - Cursing them, speaking ill against them, wishing ill on them, mocking or taunting them, not caring for them,
  - Are all ways one could break this commandment
- I think we typically associate this idea of honoring our parents with when we're younger and we still live under their roofs
  - Now, when we live in their home, we certainly need to obey their authority
    - High School, Middle schoolers... you got that?
    - When you live at home, your parents are the authority
  - But eventually, we're old enough to move out,
  - and we get to make our own decisions for ourselves
  - We still love and respect our parents, but they don't hold the same authority over us once we move out
  - That's kind of how we think, right?
- But the Jewish culture was a bit different
  - Children didn't move out of the home like we do today
  - They didn't go to college out-of-state and rack up huge tuition bills
  - Children didn't move across the country for jobs in another state
  - In Jewish culture, you would often live in the same household as your parents...
  - If not in the same household, then at least in the same city as your parents
- So, honoring your father and mother in the Jewish culture looked different
  - Children were expected to provide for and care for their parents when they got older
  - There wasn't Medicare and Medicaid
  - There weren't retiree communities or Senior Living centers or nursing homes or anything like that
  - The children provided the care that the aging parents needed,
  - because that's what the commandment to **Honor your father and your mother** meant,
  - It meant to honor them by caring for them into their old age
- So, that's what Jesus is referencing here
  - Not just the idea of obeying and listening to your parents,
  - But honoring them by caring for them when they were old

Now, that commandment came into contradiction with the traditions of the Jewish elders. It came into contradiction with the Mishna

- We just talked about how the Mishna placed huge importance on things like

- washing your hands before you eat
- and washing your plates and cups
- But another Mishna tradition
  - Was declaring something to be *corban*,
    - You're getting a lot of Hebrew this morning, I apologize for that
  - But the word *corban* is Hebrew for "a gift to God"
- And the tradition that the Jewish elders followed was to declare something –
  - some earthly possessions,
  - earthy goods
  - even their home
  - or their savings... it could be anything
- They would declare these things to be *corban*, or dedicated to God
  - And in doing so
  - In declaring something to be *corban*
  - It would absolve them of all other obligations to that item
- So, the tradition the Jewish elders followed was
  - To declare that their wealth or possessions were *corban*
    - They were dedicated to God
  - And so, they couldn't possibly be used for something less important
    - Like using it to provide for, or care for their parents
    - *It was dedicated for God! It can't be spent on earthly things or even earthly people!*
  - And they would go on living and using their money and possessions just like normal
    - But totally free of any obligation to their parents
    - **Because** they had declared it to be *corban*
  - It was like some kind of tax loophole or something

### **ILLUSTRATE: Truck**

Here's a dumb way to kind of illustrate this: I drive a pickup truck

- I've driven some type of pickup truck now for probably 20 years
- I don't need a truck for work, but it's great to have a truck to haul gear when I go up to the mountains camping or fishing or skiing or whatever
- But one thing I realized early on when I got a truck was that
  - When people needed to move

- Or move something large – like a new appliance, or some lumber, or furniture, or whatever
- The first person they are calling
- Is the person who owns a truck
- So, I learned a while ago, that one of the responsibilities that comes with owning a truck
  - Was that occasionally people would ask to borrow the truck to move stuff
  - So, I try to steward my truck well and help out when friends or neighbors need to borrow my truck to move something
- But imagine if I bought my truck,
  - and when I got home
  - I said to my wife Anne and my daughters
  - *“God really blessed us in providing this truck. So, we’re going to dedicate it to Him.”*
  - *“From now on, this is God’s GMC Sierra. This truck is corban.”*
- Then suppose the next week, Kyle Knight calls me up and says, “Hey Eric, Jackie and I just bought a new sofa,
  - And delivery from Furniture Row is expensive and will take too long
  - But I can pick it up today for free
  - But the sofa won’t fit in my car
  - Could I borrow your truck to bring it back from Furniture Row?”
- So, Kyle asks to borrow my truck to move a sofa
- And suppose my response is, *“Sorry Kyle, my truck is already dedicated to God. It can’t be used for you or your sofa.”*
- And then I stay at home that day and wash my truck, and shine the tires, and drive around town in my clean truck
- And really just do whatever I want with the truck
- Except for helping Kyle
- Remember, I don’t have to help him, because it’s God’s truck
- The truck was ‘devoted to God’ and can’t be used for anything else
  - Pretty dumb approach, right?
  - I’m sure Kyle would think so also
- That’s essentially what the Jewish elders were doing here
- That’s what Jesus is calling them out on
  - They were using their possessions for themselves
  - Instead of providing for their parents
  - Under the *tradition* that they had dedicated their possessions to God

- So, in following their tradition, they were breaking God's commandment

### **APPLICATION: Quotas**

Do we do this today? With our money or our possessions or our time?

- Have you ever not given money to someone who needs it, or to a ministry or charity...
  - Because you already give your 10% tithe to the church?
  - Your generosity is already effectively budgeted. You've already met your giving quota for the month
  - And so it prevents you from being generous elsewhere
- Have you ever punted on having a devotional time during the week or going to D-group...
  - Because you went to church on Sunday?
  - You already met your church or your Bible quota for the week?

My truck illustration was a dumb one. But there are some areas where this thinking can play out in our lives that are not so dumb

### **LAST WORD – Lips Not Heart**

So, Jesus just pointed out that

- the external traditions of the elders
- that they carry out for others to see
- are causing them to break God's commandments

And if that wasn't enough, in verse 7 he makes his strongest point. In verses 7-9, Jesus continues:

**<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.' "**

Here, Jesus paraphrases the prophet Isaiah

- In Isaiah 29:13, Isaiah says this about God's people: **SLIDE**

**<sup>13</sup> And the Lord said:  
"Because this people draw near with their mouth  
and honor me with their lips,  
while their hearts are far from me,**

Notice a couple of things here in what Isaiah said:

First, the two phrases, *with their mouth* and *with their lips*

- This is talking about our speech
- Our words
- The things that **come out** of our mouths
- So, in paraphrasing Isaiah, Jesus is hitting on the fact that our words – just like the traditions of the elders – are external
  - They are things said and done
  - For others to see and hear
  - **They may be said about God**
  - **But may not be necessarily said for God**

The second thing to notice is the phrase, *their hearts*

- Now, where are our hearts?
- Right... inside of us
- They are **internal**
- Jesus is contrasting
  - the external – our words
  - with the internal – our hearts
- He's contrasting
  - the traditions of the religious leaders
  - with the truth of God
- He's contrasting
  - Empty words from our mouths
  - With power and truth of God in our hearts

In other words, he's saying **Traditions are external but God's Truth is internal** SLIDE

Jesus is pointing out to them that:

- We can obey and follow traditions externally
  - Saying the right things
  - Doing the right rituals
  - Going through the right motions
  - And it all may look good **BLANK SLIDE**
- But if it isn't **from the heart, if it isn't from inside of us**, then Jesus says it's all in vain

- That's what he's saying in verse 9: that acting and worshiping in word only – and not from the heart – can lead to **vain worship**

What does this mean? What is *vain worship*?

- The word used here for “vain” means ‘fruitless, without results, or futile’<sup>3</sup>
- So, Jesus is saying that when we only worship God with empty words,
  - if we're just going through the motions
  - just following tradition
  - doing what we've always done
- That it's futile. It's pointless. It's all just talk

But I think Jesus is saying something else here as well.

- He just contrasted the external and internal
- Now's he's contrasting how it impacts our worship:
  - You see, one definition of vanity is ‘Fruitless and futile’
  - A second definition of vanity is: ‘showing an excessively high opinion of oneself or one's worth’
- Doesn't that sound a bit like worship? Like **self-worship**?
- I think Jesus is basically saying here, that when we only go through the motions,
  - when we only worship God in speech, only worshipping him externally
  - when we just follow rituals and traditions
- **We're not doing it for God.**
  - **But rather, we do it for ourselves**
  - To make ourselves feel good
  - Or look good to others
  - We're showing an excessively high opinion of ourselves
- But our hearts are far from God
- So vain worship is really just an external and showy – but ultimately fruitless – tradition
- It's all talk
- **True worship – is worshipping God and proclaiming the truth of God – in our hearts**
- That is what Jesus is saying here

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<sup>3</sup> Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 54–55). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## APPLICATION: Heart Root

So, in the church we talk often and frequently about our hearts. We do this because the Bible talks often and frequently about our hearts.

- God doesn't want our empty words or our lip service or our traditions
  - These are all external
- Instead, God wants our hearts<sup>4</sup>. He wants us to:
  - Believe in our heart (Rom. 10:9–10)
  - Love from the heart (Matt. 22:37)
  - Sing from the heart (Col. 3:16)
  - Give thanks from our heart (Col. 3:16)
  - Obey from the heart (Eph 6:6, Rom 6:17)
  - Give generously from the heart (2 Cor. 9:7)

But how do we do this? What does this look like?

- How do we do – what Jesus in this passage – calls us to do?
- How do we worship him and live in his truth, **internally, in our hearts**?

A pastor friend of mine<sup>5</sup> would frequently talk about what he called our 'heart root'

- It's the idea that our hearts are like roots
- Just like roots on a tree or a plant are in the ground, buried
- Our hearts are buried inside of us – our hearts are **internal**
- How roots of a plant grow will determine how the plant itself will grow – how healthy it will become, how much fruit it will bear
  - But the hard thing is, is that you can't see how the roots are growing
  - Because they are in the ground
  - You can't just go and look at the roots to see how healthy or unhealthy the plant is – the roots are internal... just like our hearts

This spring, Anne and I needed some plants for our flowerbeds around our house

- So, we went to a local nursery and picked out some plants
- I like buying perennials, as opposed to annuals
  - Perennials are plants that will come up again year after year when you plant them
  - Annuals are plants that flower for one season and then they die

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<sup>4</sup> Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 54–55). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>5</sup> Ballard, Trent. Various sermons and teachings, 2005-2012

- Perennials seem like the better investment to me, as you can enjoy them for many years
- But because of that, perennials tend to cost more than annuals
- Anyway, we go to this nursery and pick out the plants we want
  - And like anything these days, it wasn't cheap
  - A few hundred dollars later we had our plants.
  - We couldn't eat for the rest of the week, but we had some plants!
- And we brought these plants home and started planning them in our flowerbeds
  - Now, I'd just spent half my paycheck on plants, so I wanted to make sure that they will grow
  - And get established
  - And thrive
  - And look good in our landscaping
- So, I was careful and deliberate in planting them
- If you've done any gardening or landscaping, you'll know that there are a few things to do when planting a plant in the soil
  - First is **Position** – You needed to find the right place to plant **SLIDE**
    - Is the plant close enough to a water source?
    - Will it receive sunlight?
    - Does it have room to grow?
    - Are there tree roots or rocks where you're planting it that may make it hard to grow?
    - The position of the plant is important
  - Next, you **prepare** the soil **SLIDE**
    - You dig a hole big enough for the plant
    - You till the soil, you break it up, soften it
    - Working the soil, removing rocks from the soil
    - It's important to prepare the soil before planting
  - Then after you put the plant in the hole, you **provide** nutrients to the soil **SLIDE**
    - You fill the hole in with dirt
    - Maybe mixing in some potting soil in there
    - Or some good compost
    - And you water the soil
    - Maybe pour some Miracle Gro on that thing to fertilize it
  - And then finally, you **protect** the soil **SLIDE**
    - Maybe you apply some mulch to hold in moisture better

- and keep nutrients and water from evaporating
- Maybe you put some trellis around it or some fencing to protect it

You can probably see where I'm going with this: Our hearts – our heart roots – are no different than planting a plant or a tree.

So church, I want you to ask yourself today: **SLIDE**

- 'What is the **position** of my heart relative to God?'
  - Do you seek to stay close to Him?
  - Are you in regular contact with Him?
  - Maybe you've been walking closely with Him recently
  - Or maybe you're here this morning and you're distant from God
  - You're far off from him
  - Maybe you've been walking with him in word only, externally
  - But your heart is far from him
  - What is the position of your heart?
  
- Next ask yourself, 'have I **prepared** my heart to go deeper with God?'
  - Do you do things to prepare for greater depth? And growth?
  - Do you practice spiritual disciplines?
  - Things like sabbath rest, generosity and giving
  - Fasting, being in Community,
  - Are you doing things that prepare your heart to grow and grow deeper with God?
  
- Ask yourself, 'Am I **providing** my heart what it needs to grow deeper?'
  - Like spending time in God's word, learning and studying the truth of God's word
  - Do you spend time in Worship – corporately and individually
  - Are you having Prayer time?
  - Time for thanksgiving and gratefulness, remembering what God has done for you
  - What are the spiritual nutrients you're feeding your heart?
  - What are you providing your heart to help it grow?
  
- Then ask, 'Am I **protecting** my heart?'
  - Do you assess and monitor the spiritual condition of your heart?

- Do you have some accountability in place in areas of sin or struggle?
- Do you have fellow believers around you – maybe a spouse, maybe a friend, maybe someone in your D-group – who can walk alongside of you in these areas?
- How do you protect your heart?

These are all ways that we can **cultivate** a healthy heart and heart root – **one that is internally growing towards God – Not just externally following him** **BLANK SLIDE**

## CONCLUSION

As we wrap up today, you just heard me use the word “cultivate”.

Back in early February, the elders held Fathom’s annual meeting for 2022

- One of the things we do in our annual meetings is to lay out our vision for the coming year
- And the vision that we laid out for 2022 was the word “cultivate”
  - Which means to develop and grow
  - In a healthy manner
  - That fosters more growth
- And so, this year as a church, We’re focused on:
  - Growing our d-groups and d-group leaders
  - We’re growing our elder board, with 3 elder candidates
  - We’ve sent our lead pastor on sabbatical so that he can grow and deepen his union with Christ
  - We’ve grown our staff, bringing on Karena and Joel and Josh
- So, “cultivate” is the vision for Fathom in 2022, but it’s also the vision **for the body of Fathom**
  - For each member, each regular attender
  - To be growing
  - To be growing their heart closer to Jesus
  - So that our hearts are not “far from” him

How are you doing in this?

- We’re not quite halfway through 2022... how are you doing?
- Its May, its springtime, the grass is getting green, flowers are starting to bloom, all around us, things are growing
- **Are you growing?** Is your heart growing closer to Christ?
- Are you doing things to help your ‘heart-root’ to grow?

- Have you positioned yourself so that you can grow closer to Him?
- Have you prepared your heart and provided your heart things to help it grow?
- Are you protecting your heart?
- **Are you cultivating a heart that is growing in Christ?**
- Or are you simply just following Christ externally, through traditions and empty words?

I want to leave you this morning with an excerpt from Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

- In this passage, he's writing to bondservants,
- instructing them to obey their masters
- But I think it's got some great application to us today
- and to today's passage. Ephesians 6:5-8a

Paul says to obey, **with a sincere heart, as you would [obey] Christ, <sup>6</sup> not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, <sup>7</sup> rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord**

So church, let us go into the rest of this long weekend and into our week

- continuing to obey and worship and grow in Christ.
- Cultivating a heart that is growing
- Not living externally, for others to see,
- But growing internally, in our hearts, for Christ to see.

Let's pray.

## **RESPONSES:**

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – The Lord's Supper – a celebration and reminder of Christ's work on the cross (If you aren't a believer...)
- GIVING – Tithes and offerings – a celebration and reminder of God's gift of Jesus (If Fathom isn't your home church...)
- PRAYER – [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer) (If you need prayer today...)
- SINGING – Reflection and proclamation.

*First song:* reflection. In 1 CORINTHIANS 11. Paul lays out the words of institution for the Lord's Supper. But he also calls us to examine ourselves before we participate.

## COMMUNION

So, I'm going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we'll take communion, and then we'll continue to sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." TAKE

<sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." TAKE

<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let's stand and sing together.