

# GIMME GOD!

## Church Service Packet

Unclean

Matthew 15:21-28

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Welcome to the Gimme God! Worship Service. We have tried to make these resources as easy to use as possible. The sermons and prayers have been formatted with plenty of space to write in between the lines. Please feel free to make changes that will be most appropriate for your church.

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# Sermon

A man and his wife once pulled into a gas station to refuel their car. As the tank was being refilled, the station attendant washed the windshield. When he finished, the driver of the car said, “The windshield is still dirty. Wash it again.”

“Yes, sir,” the attendant answered. As he scrubbed the windshield a second time, he looked closely for any bugs or dirt he might have missed. When he finished, the man in the car became angry. “It’s still dirty!” he yelled, “Don’t you know how to wash a windshield? Do it again!”

The attendant cleaned the windshield a third time, carefully looking for any place he might have missed, but could find no messy spots anywhere. By then, the driver was fuming. He screamed, “This windshield is still filthy! I’m going to talk to your boss to make sure you don’t work here another day. You are the lousiest windshield washer I have ever seen!”

As he was about to get out of the car, his wife reached over and removed his glasses. She carefully wiped them with a tissue, then put them back on his face. The driver then saw that the windshield was spotless, and he slumped down in his seat, embarrassed.

## **Clean Versus Unclean**

Although we didn’t read it as part of our Scripture reading this morning, the story of the healing of the Canaanite woman’s daughter is set on the backdrop of what is clean and unclean. Immediately

before Jesus heads into the region of Tyre and Sidon, He has been engaged in a debate with the Pharisees and Jewish religious leaders over the issue of cleanliness.

In Matthew 15, the Pharisees are mad at Jesus because He and His disciples don't observe the traditions of ritual cleansing. Of course, Jesus knows that the reason the Pharisees are bringing this up is because, in their hearts, they hate Him. They are looking for a way to trap Him, to discredit Him, to destroy His ministry. Now, when you put motives *like that* up against whether or not someone washes his hands before he eats, which would you say is unclean?

So, Jesus responds to the Pharisees' charges by telling them that it isn't what goes *into* a person that determines if they are unclean, but it's what comes *out of* a person that determines if they are unclean. And then, He gives a list of all the things in the hearts of men that make them unclean: evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, hatred, jealousy, pride, and arrogance.

Jesus' own disciples ask for further clarification because even *they* don't understand what He's getting at. So, it can be no coincidence, then, that immediately following this conversation about uncleanliness, Jesus gets up and leads His disciples into the region of Tyre and Sidon—which was, in the minds of the Jewish people, one of the “unclean-est” places to be.

## **Learning About Ourselves**

The Jews hated the Canaanites. They considered them to be unclean people. In fact, they even

called the Canaanites “dogs.” They looked down upon them and went out of their way to avoid associating with them. The Jews thought this way toward a number of different nationalities, because, in their minds, *they* were special. *They* were elite. *They* were the “chosen ones.” It didn’t matter that they had failed to do everything God had actually chosen them to do! They were still quite willing to retain the title.

So, Jesus set out on a mission to help His disciples understand more about the unclean parts of their own hearts. After teaching them with His words, He was about to do a little “hands-on” training.

That’s one of the best things we learn about God from this story. He knows our hearts. He knows us intimately. He could read the hearts of the disciples. He knew their pride and their prejudices. He knew their thoughts. And He also knew the heart of the Canaanite woman who came to Him. He knew she was a tender and compassionate mother who would do anything to help her daughter. He knew that her faith in Him was unshakable.

But we don’t have eyes to see into the heart like God does, so we are dependent upon circumstances to *reveal* our characters. You’ve probably heard that old saying—“You don’t know how strong a tea bag is until you put it in hot water.” God either provides opportunities or He uses opportunities that come to us to help *us* get to know our hearts the way He knows them. When we come to Him, we not only get to know Him, but we also start to get to know ourselves. And in our

story for today, Jesus was taking His disciples on a collision course with an experience that would reveal their very hearts.

## **Revelations in This Story**

Let's think for a moment about what was revealed during the course of this experience. A mother comes to where Jesus is. She must know about Him. She must already believe in Him, because (1) she comes to Him begging for Him to heal her daughter, and (2) she calls Him by His Messianic name—Son of David.

Just think about that for a moment! That's pretty incredible. This woman just declares outright that Jesus is the Messiah . . . something His own disciples haven't even done! And this woman is desperate. She is begging and pleading for her daughter to be healed, crying out to God for help.

The Bible says that Jesus didn't immediately respond to the woman. He didn't say anything. We don't know why He remains silent at first, but it provides the opportunity for something interesting. Jesus' silence provides the opportunity for the disciples to react and respond to the situation *first*. And what is their response? "Lord, get her out of here. She is so annoying. Can't you get rid of her?"

## **Cold-Hearted Disciples**

It's really astonishing, isn't it? The hearts of the disciples were so cold that even the plea of a des-

perate mother couldn't arouse their sympathies. How much faith did *they* have in Jesus? Not one of them came and said, "We know you're God. You can heal her daughter with a single word. Let's do something to relieve her suffering, poor thing." No! All they wanted was to get rid of her.

It's no wonder, then, that Jesus said, "I'm sorry. I was apparently only sent to the LOST SHEEP of Israel." Now, some people have said that Jesus was being literal here. Some people have suggested that Jesus really believed He was only on this earth for the Jews and that He was denying the woman's request on the basis of her race.

But Jesus's own words betray His motives: "I was only sent to the LOST SHEEP . . ." Do you see the not-so-subtle insult there? Why, the Jews were the "Chosen Ones!" They would *never* have thought of themselves—let alone referred to themselves—as the LOST SHEEP. But that's what Jesus calls them.

## **The Disciples' Attitude in Words**

Then, as Jesus continues to talk to the woman, He does something fascinating. He puts the selfish, prideful, and arrogant attitude of the disciples into words. He talks to the woman as *they* would, with *their* attitude, so they can *hear* just how ridiculous it sounds.

Have your children ever done that to you? Have you ever said something in front of them that you really shouldn't have, and then later—usually at the worst possible moment—they repeat your

words to someone else, and you get a chance to hear what *you* sound like coming out of *their* mouths?

Let me give you an example to illustrate my point.

There was once a young family who invited their pastor over for dinner after church. When they sat down and began eating, their four-year-old said, “Mmmmm, mommy, this goat is really good!”

The mother laughed and said, “What do you mean, honey? That’s chicken! Why would you think it’s goat?”

The girl looked confused and said, “But you told daddy that today was just as good as any to have the old goat for dinner.”

It sounds a little different coming out of someone else’s mouth, doesn’t it? And that’s what God—the Master Teacher—was counting on in this situation with His disciples.

God doesn’t play favorites. He doesn’t reject people on the basis of their nationality or race. His “Chosen Ones,” the Jews, were chosen to have a special mission. They were supposed to be ambassadors for God to all the other people on Earth. They weren’t supposed to fence God in and say, “Get out. He only belongs to us.” God loves ALL His children everywhere, regardless of their race, nationality, belief, gender, or income level. He is eager and willing to embrace and help *every single one*, and Jesus was trying to help His disciples adopt the same attitude by exposing their pride.



## The Mother's Fierce Faith

And just as the hearts of the disciples had been revealed by their response, so the heart of the mother was also revealed by *her* response. She knew Jesus. She knew He was good and kind and gracious. And she knew He could (and would!) heal her daughter. She knew this, even if what Jesus was saying didn't immediately seem to line up with that.

Listen to this part of the passage again:

Jesus replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

"Yes, Lord," she said, "for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

In other words, the woman is saying, "I know! I don't want to sit at the table. I don't need the children's bread. I'm more than happy with the crumbs! I know that the crumbs that fall from the Master's table are better than a whole loaf I'm going to get anywhere else. I'll take those crumbs!"

No wonder Jesus said, "O woman, you have great faith!" The hearts of His own disciples had been revealed as cold and disinterested. The heart of the mother, by contrast, was so warm and so trusting that even her Lord's apparent rebuff could not discourage her. She *knew* what God was like, and she was richly rewarded for her faith. She ended up with a healthy, liberated daughter

## Knowing Our Own Hearts

So, if you're worried about your own motives sometimes, if things bubble up in you from time to

time that seem out of place or out of character with Christ, don't worry. In 1 John 3, John says that whenever our hearts condemn us, we should remember that God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.<sup>1</sup>

And not only is He greater than our hearts, but He is anxious to *reveal* the condition of our hearts to us so He can continue His work of restoration in our lives. The evil that lurks in our hearts doesn't put Him off. God doesn't harbor any of this "clean/unclean" elitism within Himself. On the contrary, He longs to take the unclean things in us and *clean them up!* He longs to do that so we can be happy and healthy and liberated—just like the woman's daughter.

### **God Doesn't Say, "I Told You So"**

As we come to the end of the story today, I think there's one more very important thing to point out from the encounter of Jesus and this woman. When we come to God for help, He always responds. And He does it without a judgmental attitude.

Many Biblical historians agree that it was the Canaanite people who began the practice of devil worship. We know, certainly from all the Old Testament stories, that they were heathens and worshipped many different gods. They even sacrificed their own children as part of their devil worship. So, should it be any surprise that a Canaanite woman finds her daughter possessed by a demon? What would *our* attitude tend to be toward such a situation? "Hey, you opened the door to the

devil. You decided to worship him, so if you ended up with a demon-possessed daughter, tough luck! You made your bed, now lie in it!”

That is *never* God’s attitude. He never responds to us with, “I told you so.” When we come to Him—no matter what condition we’re in—He responds with compassion and tender sympathy. He doesn’t rub our noses in our mistakes. Instead, He praises us for our faith.

Jesus and His disciples travelled to an “unclean” place to meet an “unclean” woman whose daughter was possessed with an “unclean” spirit. But who, in the story, was revealed to be the most “unclean”?

It’s been said that some folks are like Easter eggs—all decorated on the outside, but hard-boiled on the inside! The disciples in this story were like that, and we’re kind of like that ourselves. We all have evil lurking in our hearts. We all have our own pride and our own prejudices. And if we learn nothing else from the story of this mother, we should learn that—today—God is longing to *soften* us up on the inside. He is able to do it. He is willing to do it. And as we come to Him, we’ll find that He alone has the power to do it.

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1. 1 John 3:19-20

# Prayers, Etc.

## **INVOCATION**

Pure and Holy God, You are the refining fire that cleanses evil from Your creation. The light of Your love shines brightly in this dark world. The light of Your life blazes through the inky blackness of sin and death. You cannot be held back. You cannot be put down. Enter this place today and cleanse us with Your purifying presence. Amen.

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Do you need healing? Come. Do you need freedom? Come. Whatever you need, you will find in the presence of God. So come today and find peace and rest. Let us worship the Lord!

## **PARTICIPATORY PRAYER** *(may be spoken together with the congregation)*

Dear God and Father of Mankind, Your name is holy. You are sanctified and set apart as the Creator of all we see and know. You are spotless and pure, without blemish or imperfection. We, on the other hand, are unclean people living in an unclean land filled with unclean spirits. Send Your refining fire into our hearts so we may taste the purity of Your presence. In the name of Christ, we humbly ask, amen.

## **ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE** *(may be spoken by pastor after the Participatory Prayer)*

We serve a God who makes unclean things clean again. So don't hold on to your guilt and shame.

Release it to God, and He will forgive you and cleanse you. Amen.

## **CALL FOR THE OFFERING**

God always meets us where we are, tenderly caring for our needs. As He has cared for us, He also asks us to reach out and care for those around us. We now have the opportunity to do that again as we give back to God a small portion of what He's given to us. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

God, Your open-hearted and giving nature challenges our closed-fisted and stingy nature. Thank You for giving us this regular occasion to act according to Your nature instead of our own. We offer these gifts to You today with glad and grateful hearts for the kind of God You are. Amen.

## CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Tender-hearted, compassionate God, You are beautiful beyond belief. The strength of Your character, the purity of Your heart, and the depth of Your wisdom are awe-inspiring. We adore You. You are worthy of all honor, glory, and praise.

You find us in our evil and sin, but You don't leave us there. You don't criticize us. You don't meet us with a judgmental attitude. Instead, You say, "I don't condemn you," and then You gently lead us into a new life, re-creating our hearts and minds along the way.

Awesome God, Your ways are higher than our ways. Your thoughts are higher than our thoughts. The peace You give passes all understanding, and we come before You today, once again in need of that peace. Thank You for hearing the quiet whispers of our hearts, for sharing our sorrows and carrying our griefs. **[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]**

You read our hearts like an open book, and You know us intimately. Still, Your love for us is everlasting. You are infinitely patient and undeniably gracious. In Your hands, we know we are safe. Thank You for hearing our prayer this morning. Amen.

## BENEDICTION

And now, may our God—the Great Refiner—purify your hearts and drive out every unclean spirit from your life. Amen.

# Children's Story

*Method: Illustration*

*Purpose: To help children understand how God looks at clean/unclean things.*

*Suggested Props: one fresh egg; one hard-boiled egg; a large, flat surface*

Good morning, boys and girls. How many of you have ever been told to wash your hands? *When* do we wash our hands? *[Allow children time to answer.] Why* do we wash our hands? *[Allow children time to answer.]*

That's right. We wash them because they get dirty, and we don't want to touch other things with dirty hands or put food in our mouth when our dirty hands have touched it.

Well, one day, some men came to Jesus and complained to Him because they said He and His disciples weren't washing their hands often enough. Back in Jesus' day, there were a lot of rituals that people did in order to make sure that they were "clean." And these men thought that Jesus wasn't being "clean" enough.

And do you know what Jesus told them? He said that it isn't what touches you from the *outside* that makes you unclean, but it's what comes out from *inside* of you that makes you unclean.

Boys and girls, what Jesus was saying was that God is most concerned with making sure our hearts are clean, not just our hands. What does it mean to have a clean heart? *[Allow children time to answer. Possible answers: telling the truth, obeying our parents, being kind, being pure, not talking about other people behind their backs . . .]*

Do you have a clean heart? How do you know? Can you see your heart? God can see your heart. He can see if it's clean or not, and if it's not, He knows all the spots where it's a little bit unclean. *And* He can help us make it clean again. He has the power to do that.

And do you know what else God does? He helps *us* to be able to see inside our heart, too. He uses situations in our lives to show us the kind of heart we have. If you listen carefully to the sermon today, you'll hear a story about Jesus' disciples and how He helped them to see what kind of hearts they had.

But to help you understand what this means, I brought two eggs with me today. Do these eggs look different to you? *[No.]* They don't look different on the outside, but they are *very* different on the inside. You see, one of these eggs is raw, and the other one is hard-boiled. Can you tell that from looking at the outside? *[No.]*

That's just the way it is with our hearts. We look at other people, and from the outside, we can't tell what they're like on the *inside*. Only God can see if their hearts are clean or unclean. But as we have a relationship with Jesus, He helps us to see the condition of our own hearts.

Just like with these eggs. I am going to show you which one is raw and which one is hard-boiled without breaking the shells. And here's how I'm going to do it. Even though they look the same on the outside, they are very different on the inside. So, when I try to spin them, the egg that is hard-boiled will spin very easily, and it will

keep on spinning. But the raw egg will wobble around a little bit and stop spinning. It won't be able to keep spinning like the hard-boiled one.

*[Now, complete the illustration. Be careful to give enough room to the hard-boiled egg, or it might just spin right off your flat surface!]* So, boys and girls, could you tell which one was the hard-boiled egg?

We are just like these eggs. Only God can read what's on the inside of us, and it's what's on the inside that really matters. But when we get into certain situations, just like spinning the eggs, all of a sudden, we too can see what's *really* on the inside of us. And then, we can see exactly what God sees. Usually, we see that we need a lot of help from God to clean us up! But God is happy to help us become better people, just like Him.



# Responsive Reading

Gracious God, when we see the conditions of our own hearts,  
**we see how far we are from You.**

You are clean,  
**and we are unclean.**

You are faithful,  
**and we are unfaithful.**

You are worthy,  
**and we are unworthy.**

You are righteous,  
**and we are unrighteous.**

You are wise,  
**and we are unwise.**

You are just,  
**and we are unjust.**

You are merciful,  
**and we are unmerciful.**

Though we have not loved You  
**we have never been unloved.**

Though we have not desired You,  
**we have never been undesired.**

And though we have not wanted You,  
**we have never been unwanted.**

Amazing God, thank You for showing us the truth about our hearts.  
**The truth is that we want to be more like You!**

# Hymn

## God of the Ages

sung to the tune of *God of Our Fathers* (National Hymn)

alternate tunes: *Abide With Me* (Eventide), *Spirit of God* (Morecambe)

God of the ages, Your almighty hand  
Leads forth in beauty all the starry band  
Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies.  
Our grateful songs before Your throne arise.

Your love divine has led us in the past,  
And, well we know, Your love is unsurpassed.  
Be now our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay;  
Your word, our law; Your paths, our chosen way.

You will defend us from the enemy,  
Even the dangers that we cannot see.  
Pruning the evil from our inmost parts  
As You reveal Your beauty in our hearts.

Your blessings chase us all along the way,  
Travelling from night to never-ending day.  
Your love has set our weary hearts ablaze.  
You're worthy of all glory, laud, and praise.

*Words by Kelley Lorencin*

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# Song Suggestions

## Hymns

God is my strong salvation (Wie Lieblich Ist Der Maier)

*Words and music by James Montgomery and J. Steurlein*

To God be the glory

*Words and music by Fanny J. Crosby and William H. Doane*

Wholly Thine

*Words and music by F.E. Belden*

## Praise Songs

A perfect heart

*Words and music by Reba Faye Rambo and Dony McGuire*

© 1980 Bud John Songs, Inc

Create in me a clean heart

*Words and music by Keith Green*

© 1984 For The Shepherd Music

Give us clean hands

*Words and music by Charlie Hall*

© 2000 *worshiptogether.com* Music

Refiner's fire

*Words and music by Brian Doerksen*

© 1990 Vineyard Songs Canada

Revive us, O Lord

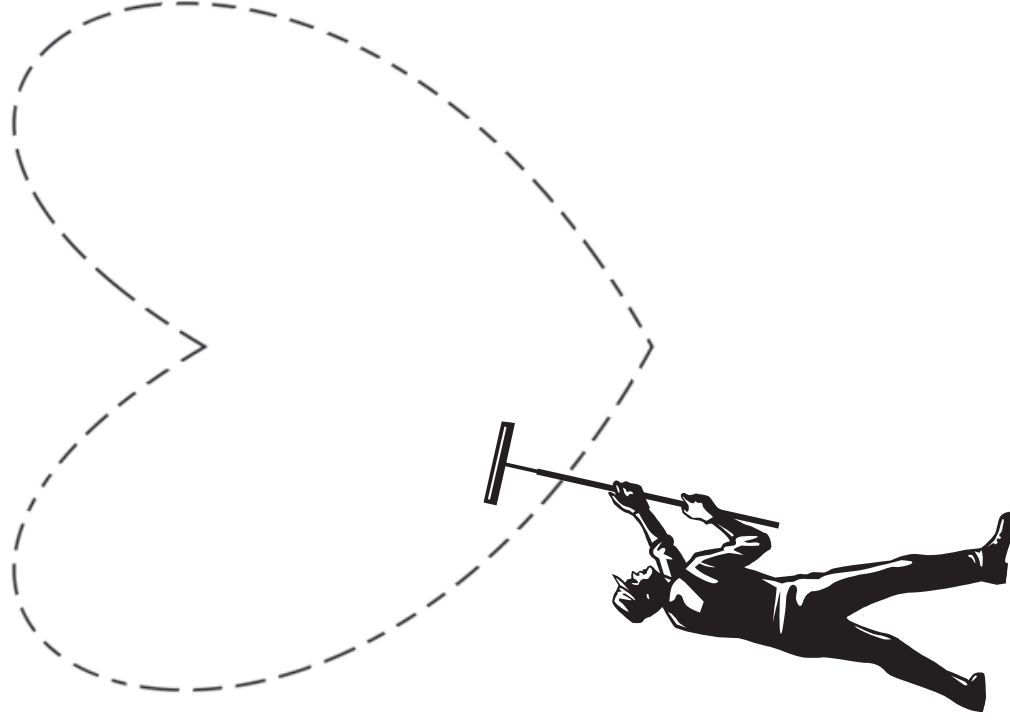
*Words and music by Carman and Steve Camp*

© 1985 Lehsen Music LLC

Jesus can make our dirty hearts clean.

Trace and color the heart below.

Ask Jesus to make the dirty spots of your heart clean.



# Wee Worship

ages 3 to 6

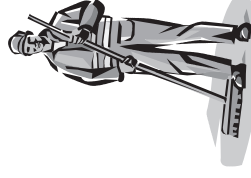
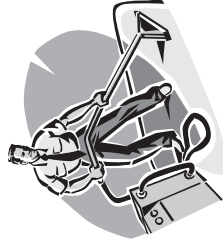
Matthew 15:21-28



Jesus Makes Things Clean

One day, Jesus met a woman who was “unclean.”

Circle the pictures of people who are cleaning.



Jesus can read our hearts.

Connect the dots.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

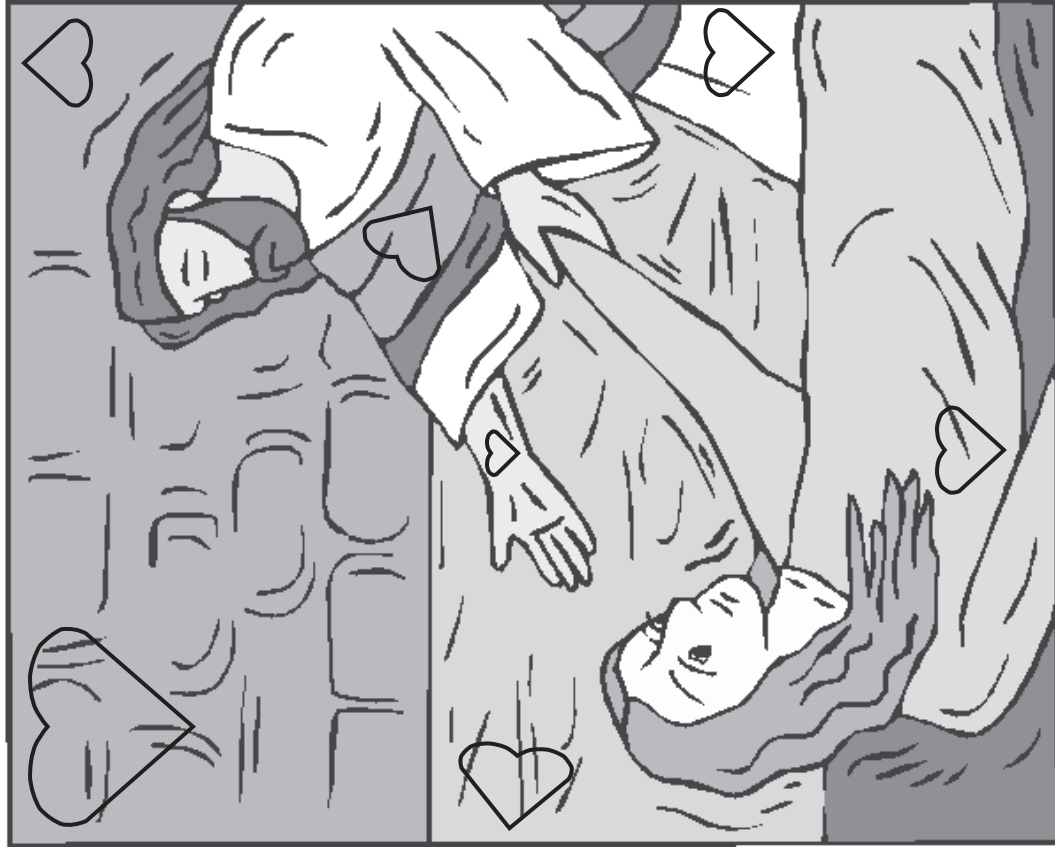


To Jesus, your heart is like an open book. He can read it easily.

Jesus gives us the desires of our hearts.

Jesus knows how to satisfy our hearts.

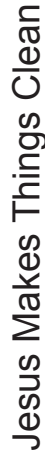
Find and circle the 7 hidden hearts below.





# Worship

Matthew 15:21-28



Find and circle five words that mean “unclean.”  
Look at the bottom of the page for hints.

# ORTALIRHU

# UAMESSEYENZC

FTUNUTMWSDK

D I R T Y L X H U Y

Jesus answered, “\_\_\_\_\_,” \_\_\_\_\_

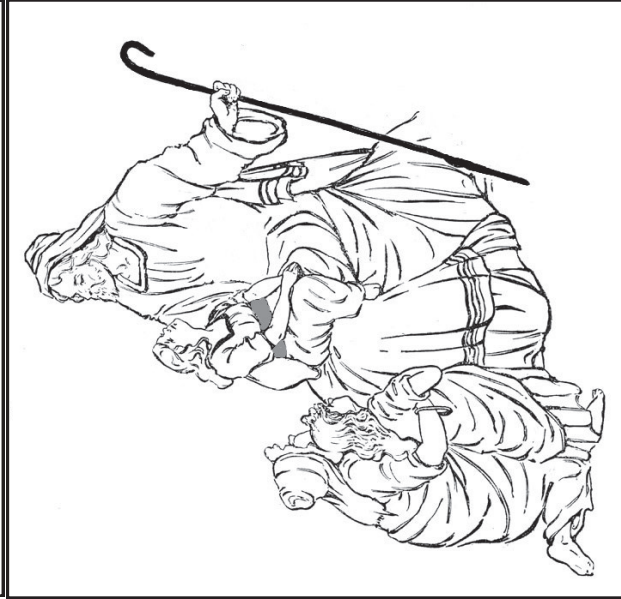
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\_\_\_\_\_ from that very hour.

**Words in the puzzle: dirty, messy, nasty, yucky, foul**

Jesus lived to heal and bless others.

Find and circle the five differences  
in the second picture below.



Jesus knows our hearts.

Fit the puzzle pieces together to complete the Bible verse.

