

Out of The Heart

Our character is firmly rooted in and springs up out of the heart. A fertile heart is necessary for growth.

Introduction

I love studying the teachings of Jesus. Spending time focusing on his teachings in the Bible is always so enlightening. Jesus has a way of shedding light on our lives and helping us see where we need to change and grow. Jesus speaks of our hearts often.

Our heart is the center of our being. Our heart is where Jesus takes up residence in our lives when we ask him to be our Lord and Savior. Our hearts can become a fountain of joy and hope when we completely allow Jesus to make it that way. You could say that what comes out of our hearts is our true selves. Today's encouraging message is titled Out of The Heart.

The Wise and The Worldly

Let us jump right in and read James 3:13-16

James 3:13-16

(13) Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (14) But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. (15) Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (16) For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

This passage compares the heart of a wise man with the heart of a worldly man. We know that the wisest man is Jesus. It is his humility and servant leadership that made him stand out when he was walking the earth 2000 years ago. As we turn to him and follow him, we should also take on these characteristics of humility and service. God is the source of this humility and service.

James contrasts this wise man with a worldly man. The worldly man boasts about himself and his accomplishments. His ambition is one of selfish gain and his heart is full of envy and strife. Nothing could be further from God. Nothing could be further from a life centered on Christ. This is a heart that is unchecked and is unruly and chaotic.

Having a heart that is full of envy and strife affects our attitude, which affects how we are viewed by other people and minimizes our effectiveness in the Body of Christ. It also takes up space in our hearts, not allowing Jesus to fully rule our hearts. Jesus tells us we cannot serve two masters. Our heart does not have room for the world and for Jesus.

Our Heart Shows Our True Character

Our heart reveals who we truly are. Whether you are a new follower of Jesus, a long-time Christian, or a non-believer, your heart reveals who you truly are. Our hearts give us away without us even realizing it at times.

Jesus teaches us in Matthew 12:33-35



Matthew 12:33-35

(33) "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. (34) You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. (35) A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

A good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit. This is a very simple concept for all of us to understand. This is how we are to judge ourselves, and to a lesser extent, judge others. We judge ourselves by what comes out of our mouths and the thoughts in our heads. The words we use and how we use them paint a picture of what our heart looks like on the inside. Our words are a much better indicator of the condition of our hearts than our actions.

We can fake our actions, trying to fool people. We want people to think we are virtuous and kind. We also want people to think we are good Christians. To prove this, we do things that show how good we are. The problem is our motivation. It goes back to what we read in James. The heart attitude is one of pride and self-righteousness. This is indicative of an unruly or chaotic heart full of the world's wisdom, which is evil at its core.

We have all seen the person who does a good thing but is muttering under their breath or complaining the whole time. Their words reveal their true thoughts and feelings about the service they are performing. If their words are not uplifting, holy, good, or encouraging, this shows us their heart is not in the right place. Their heart is not in it. They have a worldly heart that is closed to the humility, grace, forgiveness, and joy of Jesus. Our words flow from our heart, and our heart reflects what it is filled with.

Our hearts cannot harbor hate and resentment at the same time it reflects the love and grace of Jesus. Complaining and bickering reflect a heart that is full of the things of this world without room for the forgiveness and hope of Jesus Christ. Your heart can have Jesus or the world, not both.

Protect Your Heart

We must protect our hearts if we are to be effective witnesses of the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Because our words reflect what is in our hearts, we must be sure to make our hearts a fertile ground so they can produce much good fruit. We want our hearts to be like the good tree producing good fruit. Our words should be reflecting a good heart full of the love of Jesus for all mankind and creation, not reflecting a self-centered world that has no peace or joy and finds fault in everything.

We protect our heart with what we find in Proverbs 4:23-27

Proverbs 4:23-27

(23) Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (24) Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. (25) Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. (26) Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. (27) Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.



To be a true believer and follower of Jesus Christ and be a successful part of the Body of Christ we must understand this and do this. This proverb teaches us that everything starts with the heart because everything flows from it. Regardless of what we do, if it comes from a heart not centered on Jesus, it is done in vain.

Protecting our heart is done by these things, and as we do them, our heart becomes more protected. Our lives will become more focused on Jesus as we continue to protect our hearts and make them a fertile ground for Jesus to live and the Holy Spirit to work.

Keeping our mouths free of perversity is the first thing we do. Changing our language to one that is uplifting and full of the love and grace of Jesus. Be encouraging and loving with your words. The more you do this, the more fertile the ground in your heart becomes and the more fruit you will produce to share through your mouth.

As we focus on keeping our words good, holy, encouraging, and full of life, we must be sure to stay focused on Jesus, not the things of this world. It is easy to get distracted by wants and desires. Some of these wants and desires may not even be evil, but they will take more resources or time than you should be devoting to them. You could be wasting resources and time that would be better used in the service of the Kingdom by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others and serving them.

Then, finally, watch your path. Watch where your feet take you. Where you are looking is often where you will end up going. We enjoy going out on the river in our kayaks. It is fun and some good exercise to go out and paddle around. One thing is certain though. If you start to look to the right or left at something, you will start to turn and move in that direction. Riding a bicycle is the same thing. When you turn your head to look at something, your bicycle starts to move in that direction.

Watch your path. Make sure you keep your focus on Jesus, so your path always leads to him. Taking your gaze from Jesus will most certainly cause you to start to stray and your heart will start to be less fertile. Before you know it, unwholesome speech and words are coming from your mouth, and your attitudes start to become more self-centered. Guard your heart, friends.

Conclusion

Out of the heart is where who we truly are is displayed. Is your heart a fertile ground producing much good fruit for the Lord? Or is your heart an overgrown garden full of weeds and thorns only producing more weeds and thorns, good for nothing but burning like chaff? Your thoughts will answer that question for you and your words will answer that question for everyone else.

