

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, November 5, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“What’s in Your Heart?”

READING: Matthew 15:16-20 – “Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them. “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”

So, a few weeks ago I underwent a heart catheterization. They sent a catheter through an artery in my groin up into my heart, injected some dye into my bloodstream, then watched and monitored the blood flow through the heart arteries. Thankfully they found no major blockages that had to be dealt with, and in short order I was back in my room and soon back at home.

What was really weird for me was lying there during the procedure, lightly sedated but still conscious of what was going on. I have a clear memory of looking at the big monitor that hung a few feet to my left watching the catheter as the doctor manipulated it **INSIDE MY HEART**. It was in “real time”. I was looking into my own heart. I could clearly see the four chambers, the valves opening and closing, and the dye leaving the catheter and coursing through the arteries. Even sedated I had to marvel at the whole process.

What the doctor did not find was all the “evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander” that Jesus says lies in there. If those things could have been seen, perhaps they could have been removed. But of course that’s not how it works. As Jesus instructs his disciples in our text, he’s not talking about our physical hearts. No, he’s talking about the spiritual center of our being, the part that only God can see clearly. That’s the part that has always plagued humanity. That’s where sin lies, breeds, grows, and causes all manner of harm.

Jesus had just been admonished by some of the Pharisees for not requiring his disciples to wash their hands before they ate. They said he was allowing them the “break the traditions of the fathers.” He had responded by telling the crowd that the Pharisees were “blind guides” who worried about and taught the wrong things. His point in our text was to say that what went into the mouth eventually was discarded. It passed through the stomach and back out of the body. But the things that lodged in the human heart, the spiritual heart, were the things that defiled a person, made him an enemy of God, a lost and condemned creature.

There are still those who judge people by what they eat: too much fat, too much sugar, too many snacks, horrible red meat (!). They think everyone should follow their diets, their regimen, their guidelines. Okay, consider us warned. But are those same people concerned with what goes on inside their minds, inside the consciences? For Jesus, that was much more important, much more serious. The sins within us are what produce the words and actions that come **OUT OF US**. In the heart of human beings is where jealousies are nurtured, where hatreds are bred, where coveting begins, where anger is kindled, and where plots are hatched. It’s in our inner being, our “heart” where sin begets sin and where our words and actions receive their “targeting information.” In simple terms: that’s where all the trouble begins.

And only God can see the mess that’s in there. And only God has the antidote for all that mess. That’s what Jesus passes on to his disciples. He teaches them that the mess in their hearts can only be addressed by repentance and God’s forgiveness. Unless that mess is replaced by God’s word and his Holy Spirit, that

mess will hurt and assail others while it eventually destroys the one in whom it is housed. "Out of the heart..." come the things that are inside that heart. Only the forgiveness won by Christ Jesus and the faith that holds onto him can address the conditions in our hearts.

So my cardiologist looked right into my heart and saw what was going on there: pretty good blood flow, one leaky valve that has to be repaired, and a steady rhythm. What he couldn't see was the sin lurking there. Only the Lord can see that stuff. Only the Lord can address that stuff. And only the Lord can forgive that stuff and change what's in that heart so that what "comes out of the heart" may be God-pleasing and good. God is truly our best "heart doctor." Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) **TURKEY SUPPER, TURKEY SUPPER, TURKEY SUPPER** – A genuine word of thanks to everyone who helped produce the success of our Turkey Supper once again. Thanks also to those who came and ate that supper. A special thanks from me personally to those who helped me carve up a thousand pounds of turkey. **JOB WELL DONE!**
- 2) **BUS TRIP TO "SHAKER VILLAGE"** – On Tuesday, November 12, we're taking a drive to Harrodsburg, KY, and the Shaker Village Museum. We leave church at 8:15, take a guided tour at 10:00, and then eat a special luncheon there at 12:30. Should be back at church around 4:00. Cost is \$12 for the tour and \$28 for lunch, so a grand total of \$40 for the whole experience. Sign up at the office. 25 seats available.