

It's A Heart Matter

Often we are so bound by religious activity and traditions that become so engrained in us to the point that we often do not know why we continue following those practises.

Example: a mother was roasting a joint of ham and a friend was watching what she was doing. she noticed that after the ham was prepared she would cut the two ends of the ham and put it in the baking tray. The friend asked why she did that? The mother said I don't know, my mother used to do it. They asked her mother why she cut the two ends of the ham and the mother said that's what her mother did. So they finally asked the Grandma as to why she cut both sides of the ham and the reply they got was because her baking tin was too small and she had to cut the ham to fit the tray.

Matt : 15:1-20 *Some Pharisees and some teachers of the law came from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked, 2 "Why don't your disciples obey what the elders teach? Your disciples don't wash their hands before they eat!"*

3 Jesus replied, "And why don't you obey God's command? You would rather follow your own teachings! 4 God said, 'Honour your father and mother.' (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) He also said, 'Anyone who asks for bad things to happen to their father or mother must be put to death.' (Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9) 5 But suppose people have something that might be used to help their parents. You allow them to say it is instead 'a gift set apart for God.' 6 So they do not need to honour their father or mother with their gift. You make the word of God useless in order to follow your own teachings. 7 You pretenders! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. He said, 8 " 'These people honour me by what they say. But their hearts are far away from me. 9 Their worship doesn't mean anything to me. They teach nothing but human rules.' " (Isaiah 29:13) 10 Jesus called the crowd to him. He said, "Listen and understand. 11 What goes into someone's mouth does not make them 'unclean.' It's what comes out of their mouth that makes them 'unclean.' "12 Then the disciples came to him. They asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were angry when they heard this?"

13 Jesus replied, "They are plants that my Father in heaven has not planted. They will be pulled up by the roots. 14 Leave the Pharisees. They are blind guides. If one blind person leads another blind person, both of them will fall into a pit." 15 Peter said, "Explain this to us." 16 "Don't you understand yet?" Jesus asked them. 17 "Don't you see? Everything that enters the mouth goes into the stomach. Then it goes out of the body. 18 But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart. Those are the things that make someone 'unclean.' 19 Evil thoughts come out of a person's heart. So do murder, adultery, and other sexual sins. And so do stealing, false witness, and telling lies about others. 20 Those are the things that make you 'unclean.' But eating without washing your hands does not make you 'unclean.' "

Very interesting passage of scripture. Often we think that ceremonial worship is enough and if we seem to act the part it will be well. Jesus confronts that type of behaviour and explains what true worship is all about.

Often times we hear people say that they have been altar boys and bell ringers and been deacons and church councillors and governors even church leaders with the expectation that they have achieved something great but if their life style contradicts their walk with Jesus then whatever they have done has been in vain. Jesus puts the record straight much to the annoyance of the church leaders at that time. Paying lip service but their hearts not connected.

We find this ceremonial cleansing even today in some sectors where before you can enter the place

of worship you have to clean yourself/wash yourself etc and follow a certain protocol for worship. Jesus points people to the heart. He says it is a heart matter not a set of rules (v9) Jesus is interested in your heart for out of your heart flows the issues of life (*Prov 4:23 23-24 Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts. Don't talk out of both sides of your mouth; avoid careless banter, white lies, and gossip.*)

Q? What does comes out of our mouth?... as this shows the condition of our heart There is a connection of heart to mouth.

When Solomon talks about guarding the heart, he really means the inner core of a person, the thoughts, feelings, desires, will, and choices that make that person who he/she is Jesus explains this to his disciples and says that uncleanness/defilement comes from the heart via the mouth. It is this that defiles a person or makes them unclean Evil thoughts.

The Bible tells us that our thoughts often dictate who we become (Proverbs 23:7; 27:19). The mind of a man reflects who he really is, not simply his actions or words. That is why God examines the heart of a man, not simply his outward appearance.

The first step of guarding your heart is to Guard against a rebellious spirit and cultivate a spirit of submissive obedience to God's Word. Remember Pharaoh despite all the plagues hardened his heart and refused to let Gods people go from Egypt. David in Psalm 95 :7-8 pleaded with the Israelites not to harden their hearts in rebellion against God as in the wilderness.

You rebel when you refuse to adhere to the word of God and His commandments and refuse to follow Jesus. *2 Cor 10:5 tells us to keep every thought under control in order to make it obey Christ*

Murder, Adultery and sexual sins - these things are like a cancer in your body, like an atherosclerotic plaque in your artery which causes blockage of the free flow of blood. If you do nothing about these plaques it will eventually choke your arteries and you will die.... and that what sin does to us- it eventually chokes us to death.

Get rid of adulterous life styles and sexual immorality. In James 1:14–16 tells us, *"Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters."* Sin always begins in the mind. A sinner must first conceive and dwell on the sinful action before he actually carries it out. The first line of defence, therefore, must be to refuse to even contemplate a wrongful action.

Stealing, being a false witness and telling lies or gossip - The bible talks much against these things *Prov 6:16-19(NIV) 16 There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: 17 haughty eyes or proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, 19 a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community (gossip).*

Jesus makes it very clear it is not what is on the outside that defiles a man but what comes from the inside. Therefore guard your heart, your inner most being, your thoughts, your passions, your feelings, your desires and the choices you make because that will determine how you walk daily with Jesus.

God wants us to have healthy thoughts and good motives and attitudes and not just healthy bodies. Many times we focus on our physical attractiveness but fail to focus on who we really are. We tend to spend a lot of time on looking good and doing physical activity to look great but rarely do we have time for spiritual growth and maturity. Getting it right on the inside is critical for living healthy lives.

Ephesians 4: 25 says to put away lying and speak the truth; 26 Do not be angry and do not sin nor give place to the devil; 28 Steal no more but work; 29 let no corrupt / profane words come out of your mouth but only that which edifies; 30 don't grieve the Holy Spirit by who has redeemed you, don't break His heart, He is proof that you belong to God; 31-32. Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.

Jesus Loves you and desires to have a relationship with you. He desires to give you a life full of joy and purpose.

Jesus can change the past you cannot change by walking into those places of sin and failure and wipe your slate clean, your past cleaned and removed. Jesus is the same today as he was yesterday and forever His love for you will never give up or run dry or fail you. Jesus knows the worst about you and yet he believes the best... why?...Because He sees you not as you are but as His child when he gets through with you. He is an amazing friend!

Jesus has a great future for you. You can trust Him. His plans are for good and not for evil to give you a future and a hope (joyful expectation/ anticipation about the future) . Jesus listens to your every prayer.

Do you want to know this Jesus? Are you willing to do what Jesus says just because He's said it?

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life. I ask Your forgiveness. Thank you for dying on the cross for me to set me free from my sins. Come into my life Jesus. I believe you are Jesus my Lord and Saviour. Lord fill me with your Holy Spirit and be with me always . Amen*