

Where Is Your Heart?

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Good to see all the bright and smiling faces this morning.! You know, in Proverbs this morning, it says,! Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, to make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may correctly answer to him who sent you.

We all know that the Lord is coming back, and the more we see that's taking place in Israel every day and the nations that are rising up against her, we see the clock is really winding down. And each and every one of us will stand before the Lord in the future, whenever that time comes, and will give an account for the life that we have lived.

If we're born again, we're going to spend eternity in heaven. If we're not born again, we'll spend eternity in hell.

There's only two places that you can go to. And Christ makes it clear. And as I contemplated what I wanted to share on this morning, I was thinking about a timepiece that I have at home.

[2 : 00] I have a number of watches and pocket watches and stuff. I've collected them. I had a master watch repairman that would give me watches when somebody would say, oh, I'll keep it for parts because it was too expensive to fix or something.

And over time, he'd fix it, and then he'd give me the watch. And so I've got an extensive collection. But one in particular is a nice watch.

It looks like any other watch. It has a case. It has hands. It has a face. It has all the requisite parts that are necessary to carry out its function as a timepiece.

However, there's a problem with this watch. It doesn't work. It just won't run. And the reason being is because there's a problem with its heart.

Okay? I don't know if you knew that a watch has a heart. It's a mainspring that keeps everything going. Just like with us.

[3 : 20] We have a heart that keeps everything going. Inside the case, there's a spring that is the heart of the watch.

That spring is essential for its proper operation. That spring is the heart of the watch. And the problem with this particular watch is it's defective because of its heart.

And so we will pray here. And then I ask you to consider carefully what I share with you this morning.

Because it's a crucial thing that we need to understand and we need to make sure we're on the right side, if you will.

So let's bow our heads for a word of prayer.

[4 : 31] And I want to thank you, Father, for the opportunity of being here. I want to thank you for your word. Your word is the one thing that we can stand on that we know is always true.

No matter what it seems like that's going on in the world, we know that everything is going to work out just as you have said that it will. We know that no matter what we go through, that all things work together for the good of them that are loved God.

For you are transforming us, Lord. You're molding us into that new person that positionally we already are, but we go through the trials and tribulations in this life to become more Christ-like.

Father, we pray this morning that you would speak to hearts, that you would open our spiritual eyes to see, give us understanding in our heart, and make the decision that is necessary if we've not already made that decision.

So we thank you. We pray your blessing upon any guests we may have here this morning. We ask that you encourage them, that they may feel welcomed, and, Father, that you might be glorified through everything that takes place here today.

[6 : 03] For it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. There are plenty of people in the church and in religious circles that are just like that watch.

Okay? Okay? On the outside, they look fine. They appear to be religious.

They do good things. But they cannot function as they were designed to function. And the reason being is because of the issue of the heart.

They cannot truly worship God and bring glory to him because they have a problem that cannot readily be seen by a mere surface inspection of their life.

So they have a heart problem just like that watch. And they can go through all the motions.

[7 : 14] They can come to church and dress up. They can call each other saints. They can look good on the outside. They can read their Bible, go to prayer meetings.

They can do all the quote-unquote right things, but their heart has never been made right with God. And so they're broken.

Now, the fact of the matter is, I do not know who has a problem with their heart and who does not. We hear stories all the time of preachers that we thought were, if you will, on the straight and narrow, and here they were doing something that was very, very corrupt and sinful.

And God will deal with them. He exposes it in time. But ones that can look good and maybe for years lead people astray, and they look as though they're keeping perfect time.

[8 : 34] But in reality, that's not the case. I would venture to say that some of the people even in this room today do not know their own heart.

I had an Uncle Bob years ago. He climbed up to the hierarchy of the Methodist church. He was well known throughout Methodist circles for his counseling abilities and so on and so forth.

Dealt with some awfully hard cases out there at Independence and the mental ward out there. And all of our growing up years, we thought that Uncle Bob was a Christian, even though we didn't understand what a Christian was at that point in time.

We thought he was a good man. But on his deathbed, he called his wife to him, and he said, in this past week, I've done much reflection.

And for the last, whatever it was, 40, 50 years, he said, I've preached about a Jesus I never knew until now.

[10 : 04] His wife thought it was because he was on medications. And so she didn't pay much mind to it. His kids couldn't figure out what the situation was.

But Uncle Bob recognized that he had a heart problem that he couldn't fix, even with all of his knowledge, if you will, and years of going through all the motions.

And so he trusted Christ. While I don't know your heart, God does.

He knows all about it, what is inside of you and what is inside of me. He knows what makes us tick. He knows what our little idiosyncrasies are and the things we struggle with.

He understands it all. And in the passage we're going to look at, Jesus deals with some people who are suffering, if you will, from heart trouble and they don't even know it.

[11 : 21] Lord, my prayer this morning is that everyone would examine their own heart to make sure that they have made the connection that you're not just religious and going through all the motions of being religious, doing all the quote-unquote good things, but that you've genuinely got a connection with the living God.

that he is one that you are so connected with, you understand and begin to understand more and more and more of his heart because you spend the time in intimate fellowship with him.

You know, we can go through years and years and years of being friends with someone and as much as they know us, they don't know us, do they?

Because we wear a protective shell around our heart. We're stuck on our ways and oftentimes refuse to let go.

If you'll open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 15, I'd like for us to look through some points here.

[13 : 04] verses 15 through 20, or excuse me, 1 through 20. Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem saying, Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?

For they do not wash their hands when they eat. And he answered and said to them, And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your own tradition?

For God said, Honor your father and mother, and he who speaks evil of fathers and mothers, let him be put to death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or mother, Anything of mine you might have been helped by has been given to God.

And he is not to honor his father or his mother. And thus you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

You hypocrites! Rightly divide. Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.

[14 : 31] But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. And after he called the multitude to him, he said to them, Hear and understand, Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth defiles the man.

And then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly father did not plant shall be rooted up.

Let them alone. They are the blind guides of the blind, and if a blind man guides a blind man, they both will fall into the pit.

And Peter answered and said to him, Explain the parable to us. And he said, Are you still lacking in understanding also?

Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth from the heart and those defile the man.

[15 : 47] For out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man.

but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man. So I want us to look at three principles here that are given to us by the Lord Jesus.

These principles expose, if you will, the human heart. They show us how the heart works and why it is so dangerous to trust the heart in spiritual matters.

If you have never taken a close look at your heart, this might be a good opportunity to do so. And I use a phrase that could even be the title of this sermon, if you will.

It's one that I've heard dozens and dozens of times over the years, and it says the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. And that rings so true, doesn't it?

[17 : 03] That the heart of the problem, the real problem, is our own heart. We don't want to let go of hurts that we've experienced.

We don't want to let go of our own tidbits, if you will, that we think we elevate and make higher than the Word of God.

And yes, we can even have traditions that we elevate higher than the Word of God. Did you know that the Bible doesn't say you have to wear a suit on Sunday?

It's fine if you do. But Jesus said, come as you are. Today we say in some churches, you have to wear a suit. You have to do this.

You can't do that. You can't do this other thing either. And we lay out all kinds of things that our own traditions, our own perspectives of elevate that above the Word of God, and we do not choose to honor the Word of God.

[18 : 17] That is what we rest upon. That is the only truth, if you will. All truth has got to come out of the Word of God in one way, shape, or form.

I had a doctor. I think I may have shared this before, but I had a doctor I was doing marriage counseling with, and he said, I heard you're good.

That was a question mark to me. And he says, and I want you to do marriage counseling, but I also heard you're very religious. And he says, I don't want you trying to win me to Jesus or anything.

I said, okay. So I did marriage counseling with him. Met a couple of times a week for two hours at a time for about six months.

Their marriage is still going strong today. And when we finished, I said, I want you to know something. That everything I shared with you, every principle that has turned your marriage around came directly out of the Scriptures.

[19 : 27] You see, truth is truth. And when it comes to the condition of our heart and the things that God commands us to do and how it says in Proverbs 4, to watch over your heart or to garrison your heart.

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life. Watch over your heart. Check your heart.

When I read about the Pharisees or whatever, when I listen to whoever's up here in the pulpit on a particular week, I say, Lord, is that me?

Is there an element of that that's me that I need to change in my life and yield up to you? Is there an attitude that I need to adjust to line up with your attitude?

The heart is a poor student of God's Word.

[20 : 42] What it corrupts. The context here is by their traditions, the scribes and Pharisees had elevated their human traditions above God's law.

And boy, do they have a lot of them. You know, when I think about, when I read about the law of Corbin or the 613 laws on this or whatever, I'm going, oh my goodness, how would you ever remember them all?

You know, it could be enough of a struggle just to try to remember the Ten Commandments. You know, now add a few thousand to it, and how would you know if you were ever measuring up? And so it led to pride, for one. But the Mishnah, this was an oral interpretation of the law of God, and over time, this oral tradition was expanded to some 4,000-plus rules and regulations that covered every aspect of life.

Aren't we grateful that we have the Word of God and it's not a bunch of rules that we have to adhere to, but it's a relationship that we develop, that we grow into and grow with.

[22 : 23] Included in this oral tradition were elaborate rules regarding external cleanliness, especially cleanliness related to the hands.

That's what they were confronting Christ on. Some of the Jews believed that demons sat in your hands during the night, and to fail to wash them and then eat with your hands was to take into your body this demonic force.

Everybody run out and get some hand sanitizer and use it frequently. The Pharisees also were concerned lest they be defiling by something that had been touched by a sinner.

I can't imagine having a relationship with someone that was so regulated by rules that they could never have a relationship.

Some people with heart problems now, and I speak not of the physical heart, but of the spiritual heart.

[23 : 49] Some just exist, and they go through the emotions, or go through the motions, and some of them think that, well, I walked an aisle.

I got baptized. I did this. I did that. I served in Sunday school. How many of them, when you ask somebody how they're walking with the Lord, how many people talk about it's a relationship that is growing rather than, well, I do this and I do that?

I asked a bunch of, I used to take a bunch of high school kids out to Colorado for some discipleship out there, and I would oftentimes ask the kids, how are you treating the Lord?

Typically, the question goes, how's the Lord treating you? Well, we already know how the Lord is treating us, far better than we deserve. So how are you treating the Lord?

And I asked this one young lady that question, and she said, well, she said, in all honesty, he's rapidly, somewhat rapidly, becoming my very best friend.

[25 : 13] And I thought, there's somebody that understands something. It's about relationship. service comes out of a heart that is in relationship with Christ.

That brings God glory. Service that comes out of a heart that is trying to promote itself or to look good or to earn points, that kind of service doesn't do anything for the Lord.

Here's the problem with the human heart. It's a poor student of God's Word.

And that's why when we read the Word of God, when we have our quiet time, I don't care if you read, I would rather you read one verse and meditate upon it and ask God, how does that apply to me?

How do I let you change me to become more like you? I would rather have you meditate on one verse and let it do its work in your heart than to say, I read through the Bible seven times this year.

[26 : 35] because just going through the Bible without really looking for what God is trying to teach me can be like reading a textbook.

Now, I'm not undermining the Word of God when I say that because God is able to work in spite of it. But the point is is that it comes out of a relationship.

And there are those that will take God's truth and twist it, change it, rearrange it to make it fit into a box that is pleasing to themselves.

All you have to do is find the right version of the Bible that reads the right way, find you a preacher or a teacher who explains it like you want to hear it or look for an interpretation that lines up with

your lifestyle.

Some years ago, there was a young man. Well, he wasn't really that young. He was a little bit behind me. But he would go and he would ask me a question.

[27 : 50] I'd say, well, what does the Scripture say? And we'd look and he'd go, okay. And then I'd find out that he went to this one and that one and this one and that one and this one agreed with me and this one agreed with me and this one agreed with me.

Why? Because this is what the Bible taught. But he would eventually find somebody that would agree with him. And then he'd act upon it and say, well, I got counsel.

And he wasn't taking heed. He was allowing the Scriptures to be twisted, if you will.

And sometimes we can be guilty of that to make it fit our own desire, if you will. Your heart is a master of disguise in verses 7 to 14 there in Matthew 15.

In Isaiah 29, 13, it says, Then the Lord said, Because this people draw near with their words and honor me with their lips, but they remove their hearts far from me.

[29 : 03] Again, the heart issue. He calls them a very strong word. He uses the word hypocrites. You hypocrites.

This is a word that literally means an actor or a pretender. And these men really believe that they are honestly and devotedly serving God.

But Jesus tells them that they're merely actors. playing a part dictated by them, or to them, by their own deceptive hearts.

How many times have you heard another Christian say, well, I'll just follow my heart? Or maybe we offer this suggestion to someone, follow your heart.

The Bible says that the heart is desperately sick. It's wicked. Don't follow your heart. Follow God's word. A religious showing does not indicate spiritual worship.

[30 : 14] Jesus says in verse 8, this people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. What is your affection towards the Lord Jesus?

Jesus, where is your heart in relationship with Him?

Do you have, and this is a very important question, do you have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Christ? Or are you merely going through all the religious traditions, all the religious ways, you know, you come to church and you dress in an appropriate way, you know what I mean, for church, and you teach Sunday school and you do all these things, but where is your heart in the relationship with Christ?

You and Him. You and Him alone. All of our works, all of the things that we do, all of our service, if you will, comes from a heart, should come from a heart, because they love God and they're connected with God.

[31 : 46] And when you're connected with God and you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to serve. You can't help it because the love of Christ compels us my heart desire is that each and every one of you in this auditorium this morning would go to heaven.

And as I said, I don't know your heart and you don't know mine. But we need to examine our heart and make sure that we're in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and not just merely being religious.

Genuine worship is always grounded in God's truth. In verse 9 there of Matthew 15, Jesus says, but in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

John 5, 24 says, truly, truly, I say you, he who hears my word and believes him who has sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life.

This individual that is merely religious, they have no claim on eternal life.

[33 : 30] Over the years I have seen individuals, many, that have made professions of faith and I can't judge their hearts, I don't know their hearts, but I've seen them turn away almost as soon as fast as they turn to.

And any one of us can backslide, if you will, and walk away from the Lord for a while, but if you are truly born again, you're going to return because you're going to find that there's nothing out there that the world can offer you.

There's nothing out there and only Christ can bring peace to the weary soul, the troubled soul, the troubled heart.

And I get long-winded. Either that or the clock runs a lot faster than it used to. But, uh, genuinely, genuine worship is always grounded in God's truth.

What do you know as a Christian? What do you know of God's truth? Not how many verses you can quote, but what do you know about God's truth and the way that it has impacted your life?

[35 : 13] where you come into a relationship? I have many people that I could say I can associate with or that I know, but there aren't that many people that you can say you are in relationship with.

And coming into relationship with Christ is what he spoke about in John chapter 3 and verse 3 when he told Nicodemus he had to be born again.

In John 14 and verse 6 when Jesus said as he spoke with his disciples and he said he said I am the way and the truth and the life.

I am the way not one of many. I am the truth not one of many sources. I am the life the only source of life that one can possess really.

and then he goes on to say I am the way the truth and the life and no one no one comes unto the Father except through me.

[36 : 40] There are not many ways to get to heaven. There's only one way it's God's way and it's Jesus. Jesus. your heart is a window into your soul in verses 15 to 20 and I'm going to steal another five minutes maybe but your heart is the window into your soul and what does it confess?

what the heart conceals from the individual it reveals to other people. We can try to hide things but often times other people can see things that we can't and that's why we need to be open with one another and especially open with the Lord.

Lord what is it in me that needs to change? what is it in me that is hindering my relationship with you?

Do I need an attitude adjustment? Do I need to confess some sin that maybe right now I'm not even aware of and Lord open my eyes that I might see that sin and repent of it?

I want to make a couple of contrasts here as we wrap up.

[38 : 21] External religion says be clean physically and morally that's what religion external religion does.

Internal redemption says be born again and made into a new creature. You are a new person if you're born again. You're new and wonderful and wonderfully made and we can reflect the glory of God.

When Moses came down off the mountain he wore a veil to protect if you will to hide the glory that's shown around his face and when we're born again people start to notice in the things we do and the things we say.

Why? Because we have been internally redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ and he's made us a new creature. External religion says a clean exterior makes a clean interior.

Internal redemption says when the inside gets clean it will clean up the outside. You see it's the heart.

[39 : 51] We come back to the heart again and again and again. External religion says you must develop some rules to govern your behavior.

Internal redemption says I love God therefore I will live right. I will be faithful to him.

Like when you make your wedding vows and you pledge make a vow before God that you will be faithful to your mate and then you live that life through whatever trials and tribulations you may go through you live that life and faithfulness because you're committed because you have an internal relationship love and chances are your spouse knows more of your good points and bad points than you do especially the bad points by the way love and why because you're in relationship external religion says be faithful to your church its practices and its teachings and you will be clean internal redemption says be cleansed by

Jesus and you will be faithful to your church its practices and its teachings you see in all of this beloved it comes back to our heart and the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart so how is your heart this morning are you truly born again has your life been something that God has been transforming if you will in the process of making you different more like Christ I'm not asking you about are you becoming more religious are you like that young high school girl that says he's becoming my best friend that don't happen without connection that don't happen without choosing to be in relationship and when we go to

Christ he takes that broken watch and he fixes the main spring and then it does not only look nice on the outside and have all of the looks if you will but then the internal which runs the watch that is fixed and Christ can fix you so you keep time if you will in the way that you were meant to keep time and the way that you are to be in that relationship with the living God so I would plead with you this morning as I close in prayer examine your heart we don't know our own heart we like to think we do but our heart is deceptive ask yourself am

[43 : 49] I truly in relationship with Jesus Christ have I turned to him and repented of my sin so the way that I was going I'm no longer going I've done a turnaround if you will and now rather than me going down this path and me calling the shots I turn around and I trust Christ and I follow after him and I am in relationship with him and that relationship can grow stronger and sweeter every year the rest of your life make sure you're in relationship and thank you for the grace of letting me go over time let's pray our father we're we're grateful this morning grateful that we have you that your son has saved us from our sin that your holy spirit indwells us and leads us into all truth teaches us instructs us lord may we be not like the broken watch that looks good on the outside but inside it don't function may we be ones that function correctly and the outside will take care of itself so father I pray that each and every one would examine their relationship with you and we give you the honor and glory for it in Christ's name we pray amen