

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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April 28, 2024

“How To Fill An Empty Heart”

By Brian Meade

Notice the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:43-45, *“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”*

Jesus said these words to some of the religious leaders who wanted to see a sign from Him (Matthew 12:38-39). Jesus is dealing with their hardness of heart against Him, and thus relates to them how the Ninevites and the queen of the South both saw two men of God at work, and respected them!

The Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah (12:41), and the queen of the South was so amazed by the wisdom God gave to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-9). But sadly, the scribes and Pharisees could not get past their own faithlessness in Jesus, as the Christ. That’s why these words in verse 43-45 aptly apply to these men. They needed to get rid of their preconceived notions, prejudice, and religious pride in order to see Jesus for who He truly was— the Son of God!

But in this illustration of their condition, Jesus relates the fact that their heart was not right to the point— that if they were to get rid of these hindrances to faith in Jesus— it wouldn’t be very long until they would revert back to rejecting Him. They would miss their life the way it was before and go back to their former hatred of Jesus. Some would be tempted to go back, or find fault with Jesus when He didn’t fit their thinking.

Jesus knew some might be able to get rid of their attitudes, and thus clean out their heart, and that is good. But would they be able to come to genuinely love and serve Jesus as their master? And thus, filling their heart with new purposes under Christ’s direction and leadership. Jesus knew that would be the challenge for them to surrender their lives to Him in obedience and devotion.

And as we look to this occasion in the life of Jesus’ dealings with the scribes and Pharisees, we ask the question: How does this story relate to us today? What lessons can we learn from this Scripture? And can we make application to similar situations, and not do damage to the context of the text?

I believe the Scriptures make application in principle to various Bible truths for us to understand and profit from. And in this case, we can make application to getting rid of sinful attitudes and ways— thus, emptying our heart of all bad!

And then there needs to be the most important part, the filling our heart with all good things from God and His word! It is extremely important that we understand that Christ wants us to live for Him. In other words, neutrality and just having a kind disposition toward Jesus is not enough, we must surrender fully to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! (Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 14:25-33).

Now when it comes to making this application, how does it apply? Could it be to those who have developed a hate for Lord Jesus and His followers, and then coming to the realization that such hate is wrong—therefore, emptying their heart of such evil toward Jesus? They may even stop trying to fight against His followers and think such reforms are good enough.

I remember hearing the story a preacher related in a sermon about a young lady he was trying to convert to Christ. She grew up in a home of Satan worshippers, and studied with the preacher for a while. He helped her to see that her life needed to change in repentance from such a lifestyle of devotion from Satan. She came to the right conclusion that she needed to get away from her family and repent of such vile behavior. But sadly, she broke off the studies after that part, and never came fully to obey the gospel to be saved from her sins.

After we empty our heart from evil, it indeed is a crucial time to learn to fill our heart with God's ways! We must come to realize, like 1 Peter 2:3 says, "*if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*" In other words, we must realize by experiencing just how good the Lord is to us and for us! And never want to leave Him!

We also understand full well that people are going to live for something, whether it's good or bad. There are people mentioned in the Bible as examples on both sides of this equation. We remember stories of the Old Testament about king Ahab, as 1 Kings 21:25 tells us, "*But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.*" Ahab lived to do wrong things! And others followed after his same path of wickedness, never to veer off that course. Some are just attracted to the temptations of sin and its pleasures too much to give it up! But they can (1 Corinthians 10:13), and should to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). And if they did repent, they would have to find something besides sin to give them pleasure and meaning in their lives. Otherwise, they might go back to the old life.

It's just like someone who gets off drugs and alcohol, or leaves the homosexual lifestyle— they have to find joy in the new life in Christ by filling their heart with the goodness of God's ways. Otherwise they may revert back!

So, How Shall We Fill Our Hearts?

1. Realize That Having Our Heart Cleansed Is Only The Beginning.

Hebrews 9:14 teaches us, "*how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*"

The Bible teaches us that Jesus died on the cross at Calvary (Luke 23:33) in order to shed His blood for the remission of our sins (Matthew 26:28).

Titus 2:14 teaches us concerning Jesus' sacrifice, "*who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*" We are saved to be zealous in our service to Christ in His kingdom (Matthew 6:33; Ephesians 2:10).

We should fill our hearts with good works and serve Christ (Titus 3:8; Hebrews 10:24).

2. By Making A Strong Commitment To Grow In Christ.

Please note the commitment the early disciples made in Acts 2:38— 2:42. In verse 42, it is said, "*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" (NASB).

Once we obey the gospel, we are pictured as a newborn babe in Christ (1 Peter 2:1-2). Just like a newborn baby enters this world by birth and begins to grow, the same is true for the new Christian beginning the growing process as well. Growth in Knowledge, grace, and maturity in Christ takes time and effort on our part (2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:13-15) It also takes a strong commitment to filling our heart to make it happen.

3. "Sanctify The Lord God In Your Hearts"

"*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;*" (1 Peter 3:15).

Peter reminds us that it is only possible to "give a defense" and a reason of the hope" to others, if we have filled our heart with it. It is the only way "that it is in you"— because you have intentionally placed it there. "Sanctify" means to set apart. Particularly, that means Christ- as Lord of our life!

4. Be Filled With God's Word.

Psalm 119:10-16; Colossians 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:13-16.

It is extremely important to be filled with God's word to fight temptation, to know and do God's commands, and shape our behavior as Christ our example.

5. Worship Regularly.

John 4:23-24; 1 Peter 2:5.

Make it your life to fill your heart in praise and worship to God.

6. Pray Often.

1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6-7.

Fill your life with praise and thanksgivings to God in prayer. Fill your heart with the concerns and needs of others, as we pray for them.

7. Meditate On Wholesome things.

Philippians 4:8, "*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*"

Choosing the pure, noble, just, lovely, and things of good report to meditate and fill our minds with will only help to better ourselves. In doing this, we fill our heart with the opposite of a life of sin— Righteousness, godliness, & faith.

Those Who Need Our Prayers & Encouragement:

Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Daniel Holloway, Debbie Keplinger, Robbie, Sheila, Sherry Doles, Sandi Poole, Nathan Cox, Sandra Oliver, Chad Harris, Eli Johnson, Jamie Jones, Mary Ann Holley, LuAnne Parrish, Robert Howard, Billy Grisham, Fred Johnson, Burt Ward, & Wesley Trimble.

Our Gospel Meeting with Stacy Crim Begins Today!

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Russell Briggs
Preaching: Stacy Crim
Sermon #1: "Our Adversary"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Preaching: Stacy Crim
Lesson #2: "What Shall I Wear?"

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Brian Meade
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Doug George
Scripture Reading: James 1:22-25
Song Leader: Paul Busby
Lord's Supper: Doug George
Assisting: — —
Preaching: Stacy Crim
Sermon #3: "The Gap Between Hearing & Doing"
Closing Prayer: Jerry Kennemur

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

May 1, 2024

Announcements: Brian Meade
Gospel Meeting Preaching: Stacy Crim
Song Leader: Paul Busby
Closing Prayer: Paul Johnson

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