

The Good Heart: how do we get from here to there? Matthew 12:33-50

His (Jesus') death was understood by his early disciples to be an ultimate revelation of the Father heart of God. "God proves his love for us," Paul wrote, "in while we were still rebelling against him, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8, PAR). That is, his death was a revelation of the nature of basic reality. Without knowledge of it and its meaning, we are desperately ignorant of reality, and therefore all our thinking can only result in monstrous falsehoods.

Dallas Willard, Renovation of the Heart

Jesus continues his reproach of the Pharisees, v.33-37.

- Good trees, bad trees.
 - Some fruit bearing trees can be improved with fertilizer and proper cultivation, but some cannot. _____
- Drawing the human comparison.
 - *How can you Pharisees ("brood of vipers"), who are evil, speak anything good?* _____
 - You may sound good, but your words produce sickness. _____
 - *A good man, however, brings out from his heart what is good, while the evil man likewise brings out his evil "treasure."* _____
 - What is the impact of your life on others, joy or misery, peace or fear? _____
- We shall account for our "careless" words in the judgment.
 - "Careless", not accidental, words, from which we fail to repent or be concerned with. _____
 - In v.37, we have another declaration from Jesus which should frighten us. _____

The Pharisees respond with more demands on Jesus, v.38.

- *We want to see a sign from you.*
 - In other words, *show us some tricks or magic.* _____
- Treating Jesus like a novelty. _____

Again, the response of Jesus addresses the spiritual ignorance of the Pharisees, v.39-42.

- *An evil and adulterous generation craves a sign.*
 - Just another way of attempting to control God. _____
 - Negotiating terms with God. _____
- The sign of Jonah.
 - Analogy: 3 days in the belly of the monster compared to 3 days in the heart of the earth. _____
- Something greater than Jonah or Solomon, v.41-42.
 - Re: v.6, the temple. _____
 - The wisdom and power of God is right here before you, and yet you refuse to honor it. _____

The "empty house" analogy of false righteousness, v.43-45.

- The notion of righteousness being the absence of sin.
 - In that sense, a rock is righteous. _____
 - Empty is not righteous. _____
- The old "spirit" returns with a vengeance.
 - The spiritual space, or vacuum, within us must be filled with something. _____
 - The hard-hearted believer. _____

Our new family: the effect of a changed heart, v.46-50.

- Just as righteousness does not exist in a vacuum, the sanctified heart is not independent. _____
- The fellowship of the *ekklesia*. _____
- A warning: don't abandon your family over the occasional bruised ego. _____

The world we live in is in one or the other of two states: either active denial of God and his power, or active negotiating with God over the terms of his surrender (C.S. Lewis, God in the Dock). This last state is represented by the Pharisees, whose condition was one of even greater evil than the atheistic or agnostic denial of God. It is also the state which permeates the character of many current expressions of Christianity, where ignorance of scripture and the history of God's interaction with humanity is preferred. Jesus, though, calls us to submit to his Spirit, which was to come to us through his death.