



Tues 8/ Weds 9 November 2022: Luke 11:37-12v2 – A Meal of Integrity

1. (*Ice-breaker if needed*): Have you ever had a really awkward dinner time conversation – when someone put their finger on any rough edges of your character? How did you take it...?!

Read Luke 11v37-12v2

(NB: *The Pharisees and the Disciples are, in one sense, in different categories: The Disciples, however imperfectly, really do want to believe and follow Jesus, and they'll soon have the Spirit's renewing work in their hearts. The Pharisees are the opposite – they resent, resist and reject Jesus, and so know nothing of His Spirit's transforming power. So we do need to be careful how we apply Jesus' Woes to the Pharisees to us as believing disciples. But, in another sense, we too can be Pharisee-ish in our hearts!*)

The Diagnosis

2. *v.39-40*. What's Jesus' diagnosis of the religious leaders of his day?
3. How does it feel to know that Jesus, the Lover of our souls, sees our hearts like no-one else can?
4. *v.42*. The Pharisees are all about busy activity and external impressiveness – but internally they are cold to the love of God and his concern for justice.
Is that ever a danger for us? Or do we face the opposite danger – having hearts of devotion but not showing itself in practical concern for others?

The Symptoms

5. **Climbing** *v.42 and v.46*. It seems the Pharisees are striving to impress God, performing an act, climbing the ladder, earning their way. Are there times when, on some level, we feel we have to meet a minimum requirement to win God's smile?
6. **Comparing** *v.43*. The Pharisees, lacking a sense that in Christ they can be fully accepted and unconditionally loved by God, are deeply insecure, and so compare themselves to others. Does that ever happen in lives?

For some groups, this may helpful to discuss:

“So many Christians seek to draw their assurance of acceptance with God from their sincerity or keenness, their past experiences, their performance, or their avoidance of ‘really bad’ sins. We need to learn to start each day with a deep, hearty, resting sense that we are completely accepted and clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ....

Christians who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons...Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness and defensive criticism of others.”

[Adapted slightly from Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, quoted in Tim Keller, *Center Church*]

The Cure

7. On Sunday we heard that, with Jesus, “when we don't meet His perfect heart standards, he doesn't cancel us in judgment – he comes to us in grace.” What's reassuring for you about Jesus' work for us and in us by the Spirit, giving us a new heart and continuing to clean us up on the inside (Titus 3:4-6) ?
8. How practically can we rest in Christ every day, not our own performance? And remind each other as a CG in that?

Extra material overleaf for personal study!

For further self-study – as this issue of the heart is so key! – you may like to read Tim Keller’s very short book ‘The Prodigal God’, which especially looks at the elder brother of Luke 15, lost in his religion.

You may also like to send a photo/copy of this chart to your group, or, if time, discuss one of the lines.

RELIGION	GOSPEL
"I obey; therefore I'm accepted."	"I'm accepted; therefore I obey."
Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get <i>things</i> from God.	I obey God to get <i>God</i> —to delight and resemble him.
When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe, like Job’s friends, that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle, but I know that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his fatherly love within my trial
When I'm criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identify is not built on my performance but on God’s love for me in Christ.
My prayer life consists largely of petition and only heats up when I am in need. My main purpose in prayer is to control circumstances	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with him.
My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to people who fail. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel humble but not confident—I feel like a failure.	My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ I am at once sinful and lost, yet accepted. I am so bad he <i>had</i> to die for me, and so loved he was <i>glad</i> to die for me. This leads me to deeper humility as well as deeper confidence, without either sniveling or swaggering.
My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, so I <i>must</i> look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to others.	My identify and self-worth are centered on the One who died for his enemies, including me. Only by sheer grace am I what I am, so I <i>can't</i> look down on those who believe or praise something different from me. I have no inner need to win arguments.
Since I look to my pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my head manufactures idols—talents, moral record, personal discipline, social status, etc. I absolutely <i>have</i> to have them, so they are my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, whatever I say I believe about God.	I have many good things in my life—family, work, etc., but none of these good things are <i>ultimate</i> things to me. I don't absolutely <i>have</i> to have them, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despair they can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.

From Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 65.