

Matthew 23:2-12(NIV)

<sup>2</sup>“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

<sup>3</sup>So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

<sup>4</sup>They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

<sup>5</sup>“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;

<sup>6</sup>they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

<sup>7</sup>they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.

<sup>8</sup>“But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers.

<sup>9</sup>And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.

<sup>10</sup>Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah.

<sup>11</sup>The greatest among you will be your servant.

<sup>12</sup>For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Mark 12:38-44 (NIV)

<sup>38</sup>As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces,

<sup>39</sup>and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.

<sup>40</sup>They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

The Widow's Offering

<sup>41</sup>Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

<sup>42</sup>But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

<sup>43</sup>Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.

<sup>44</sup>They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends. I pray that you had a Merry Christmas and in the midst of the **eating** and exchanging of gifts and **eating** and watching TV and **eating** and playing with your toys you remembered that Jesus is still the reason for the season. I have a friend whose voice mail response says "Jesus is the Reason for the Season, whatever the Season". I use to frown when I heard it in spring, summer and fall now I just smile and realize that he is absolutely correct. If you remembered to celebrate Jesus during this season then stand on your feet and praise Him this morning. From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same Jesus is worthy to be praised.

I have always been perplexed by the fact that often our Sunday School curriculum does not flow, as I would like to have it flow. Come on, if we celebrated the birth of Jesus on Friday how can He be 30+ years old on Sunday and nearing the end of his earthly ministry? But as I reviewed the daily bible readings and the background scripture (as I am sure you did) it seemed that maybe this selection was timely for the last Sunday of 2015. For the lesson aim is to remind us to give willingly and generously to the work of God. And some of us may have a little catching-up to do in order to pay our full tithe for 2015.

Commentaries state that the discourse in Mark, which we are considering this morning, takes place during the last week of Jesus' life. The 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark includes the parables and the Q&A session Jesus had with the teachers of the law. In other words, prior to telling them about the how the leaders desire to be noticed and praised, he answered their questions, all of which were asked to try to trick Jesus or make him say something they could use against him in the courts.

As I researched I had another thought. About this time of year we begin to think about how we will be better, different, new and improved in the coming year. I even asked the Adult Bible Study class to think about "how they would like for God to transform them in 2016?" But before we can honestly prepare for the coming year it would probably be a good idea to do a spiritual check-up on 2015. We have the rest of today and four more days until the end of 2015. In that time which is left I want to encourage you to do self-examination of your walk and your talk to consider if there is a need for improvement. Let

me put it another way: "Are you living the life you sing about in your song?" If that does not speak to your heart, how about: "Can anybody see Jesus in You?" Let me try it one more time: "If God called you in for a check-up what would be the diagnosis?"

If the disciples who had walked, talked and prayed with Jesus for three years needed a way in which to look at how they had lived and would live going forward then it is probably not much of a stretch to say that we might need a bit of help ourselves.

Would you pray with me and for as I wrestle with this theme?

### **It Is Time For A Spiritual Check-Up!**

#### **SHALL WE PRAY:**

**Father God, we your children are here in your house waiting to hear a word from heaven. We need a word to sustain us as we move thru times of sickness and sorrow. We need a word to transform us into what you would have us to be. We need a word that will help us to hold our peace and let you fight our battles. We need a word for the mad times, the sad times and the glad times. Abba, I asked that you allow me to bring that word! Please open each of our hearts, ears and minds to what you would have us to do. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ we pray! Amen and Amen.**

### **It Is Time For A Spiritual Check-Up!<sup>1</sup>**

Now if you have been to the doctor recently you were probably greeted by a person with a lap top in hand who asked to weigh you, take your blood pressure, your temperature, and if you are my age, measure you to see if you were shrinking and finally ask "what brought you to the doctor today?" On one occasion I said: my ears are bothering me; my digestive system is on its own page; my joints are increasing more painful; I am not sleeping well and I just feel tired and rundown". The person with the computer wrote it all down, read it back to me and then said: "You only have 15-20 minutes with the doctor, so what is the most important?"

That is the situation we are in this morning, we only have 15-20 minutes for our spiritual check-up and so we need to focus on those things, which are of the greatest importance.

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to acknowledge the work of David Asch for planning the seed for today's sermon.

For the note takers I will be examining our mouth/tongue; our eyes; our ears; our hearts and finally our hands. There will be some overlap, but don't get discouraged if you can't get it all down – it will be on the website by Wednesday evening.

### **Shall we begin?**

God the Father enters the examining room and begins our spiritual check-up

**“Open your Mouth** I wish to examine your tongue and see what you have been producing with your mouth. I want to know if you have been cursing your neighbor or speaking words of blessing”.

As He looked inside, God says, “I see you have been doing a bit of both. My Word says in Matthew 12:36

*<sup>36</sup>(But I tell you) that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.*

So here is **a prescription to help you with your mouth.**

a. Learn to **sing** a children's song called “O Be Careful Little Eyes What You See” one of the verses will apply to **your mouth** it says:

“O be careful little mouth what you say  
O be careful little mouth what you say  
For the Father up above is looking down in love  
So be careful little mouth what you say”

b. **Read** James 3:1-12 and memorize v6.

*<sup>6</sup>The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

c. **Pray** Psalm 19:14

*Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart  
be pleasing in Your eyes, O Lord, my Rock and the One Who saves me.*

God reaches up and gets a light off the wall He looks into **our eyes**, as they provide insight into our soul, and God says: “I see you have been so busy working on the speck in your brother's eye that you have overlooked the growth in your own. But I can help you with that.

a. Learn another verse of that children's **song** I mentioned earlier, for as I look down in love I not only **hear** what you say, but I also **see** what you choose to see.

b. In order to grow stronger you need to stay in the **scriptures**. Consider Matthew 6:22

<sup>22</sup> *"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy  
your whole body will be full of light.*

c. Memorize these verses from Psalm 119 as prayer:

<sup>18</sup> Open my eyes that I may see  
wonderful things in your law.  
<sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes away from worthless things;  
preserve my life according to your word.

God has checked on **our mouth and our eyes** and now He moves to listen to our **heart**. The first comment God makes on our heart is that it is not fully committed to Him. Like the teachers of the Law in the first century we know the teachings of scripture, but we have not given our whole heart to Him. But God is a God of mercy and so He says:

a. Read the parable of the sower as recorded in Matthew 13, pay special attention to verses 14-15, which is from prophecy of Isaiah.

<sup>14</sup> In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

*"You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.*

<sup>15</sup> For this people's heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.

b. Memorize Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God

c. Pray the first verse of **Give Me a Clean Heart**

*Give me a clean heart so I may serve thee.  
 Lord, fix my heart so that I may be used by thee,  
 For I'm not worthy of all your blessings.  
 Give me a clean heart, and I'll follow thee.<sup>2</sup>*

Our time with the Father is rapidly coming to an end, but He has said He would examine **our hands** before the spiritual check-up is over. "**Open your hands**", God says, "I remember that you said they were stiff and the joints were aching. What have you been doing with you hands?"

Have you **overworked your hands** working to help others? Have you served meals, washed feet, or laid your hands on another in blessing? Are your hands tired from folding clothes in the pantry or boxing up food for the hungry? Are you hands tired because you have written a letter for someone who cannot write? Prepared a meal for someone who could not? Shampooed hair and message scalp and shoulders for someone who cannot get out to get these services.

**Or** are your **hands** tired from being in a closed position for so long – closed as you held on to the money I had provided – closed as you held on to clothes you have outgrown- closed hands as you refuse to open them to help a child, a senior, a special needs person – closed tightly so that nothing can get out and nothing can get in. Are your hands as closed as your heart and mind, **refusing** to help or support anything that is not your thing. As we look at our hands, God slowly walks out of the room. We hear Him say to the person with the laptop " I have done all that I can do. I have shown them where there is room for improvement. I sent my Son so that they may follow Him and return to me. I have given them modern day psalms to sing, my word to read and even suggested that they find some words and store them in their hearts. It is up them now. If they would humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways I will hear them and heal them and those around them as well.

**AMEN AND AMEN**

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://mamajaysgoodnews.blogspot.com/2009/10/songs-of-my-heart-give-me-clean-heart.html>