

Sermon for Sunday, September 19, 1982 by Dr. Andrew A. Jumper, Senior Pastor  
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SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY AND THE POLLUTED HEART  
St. Matthew 15:10-20

Text: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery,  
fornication, theft, false witness, slander."

St. Matthew 15:19

One of the interesting things being rediscovered in medical science today is what is being called "holistic medicine". It is being discovered that man is a unity, that he is a whole person. Therefore, in order to treat this whole person when he becomes ill it is necessary to treat every aspect of his being. You see, when one part of a person's life is sick, that sick part affects every other part of his life. For example, if a person is physically ill, it affects his emotional well-being, it affects his social relationships to those about him, and it affects him spiritually. By the same token, if a person is suffering from broken human relationships, it impacts his health (did you know that single people have more physical health problems?), it impacts his mental attitudes and it impacts his relationship to God. So we are indeed whole persons. What affects us in one realm of our lives spills over to affect us in every other part of our being.

Well, that is nothing new to the Bible. As a matter of fact, this has always been the biblical understanding of man. In the third chapter of Genesis when we are told about man's creation, the Bible says that God formed man from the dust of the earth and then it says he breathed into him the breath of life. At that point the Hebrew says literally "and man became a whole personality." But Genesis, chapter three, tells us some other interesting things. It goes on to demonstrate how this man is a whole personality where all of his parts are interrelated. Thus, when man falls spiritually by disobeying God, this affects every aspect of his being. It impacts his whole personality. As a consequence, physically he becomes subject to pain, sickness and death. Emotionally he becomes subject to fear--the basis of all psychosis. Socially a brokenness enters human relationships and immediately a brother kills a brother. And, of course, spiritually man is cut off from God. So we are indeed whole persons. What affects one part of our lives spills over to contaminate and ruin every other part of our being.

So this morning I want to talk about our spiritual well-being and how it impacts our total lives. You see, a lot of us are suffering from spiritual illness. It is not as immediately obvious as a virus or an infection or some dread disease such as cancer, but in the long run, its consequences are just as devastating and just as deadly. I want to talk about pollution and spiritual ecology. We hear a lot today about waste dumps, about acid rain, about pollution, about ecology. Well, I want to talk about spiritual ecology.

Do you know what a definition of ecology is? The dictionary says that it is a branch of science concerned with the interrelatedness of organisms and their environment. You and I are organisms and we live in a physical environment. The condition of that environment affects us dramatically. For example, on days when the pollution level is at a

certain level, older people and people with respiratory problems are warned to stay indoors. But by the same token, we have an inner spiritual environment. And the condition of that inner environment affects us tremendously. Isn't that what Jesus said in our Scripture this morning? He said, "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man." Then he adds, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts..."

Well, the evil things that come from our hearts come because we put them there in the first place. Have you ever wondered why you have trouble growing spiritually? Have you ever wondered why you are not as holy--as good--as Christ--like as you should be or as you want to be? I suspect most of us feel that way. We truly want to be better than we are but something is wrong and we are not growing spiritually as we wish we might.

Hasn't Jesus--in our Scripture this morning--given us a clue as to what might be wrong? Could it be that you and I are putting so much trash in our hearts and we are getting trash back? One of the things they say about computers is, garbage in, garbage out. That is, you can only get back from a computer what you put in. Therefore, if you put in garbage, that is what you will get back. Well, the same is true for the human heart. If we put trash in--if we put evil things and evil thoughts into our hearts, that is what we are going to get back.

Over in Philippians, chapter four, verse 8 through 9, St. Paul writes, "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." St. Paul is suggesting a spiritual urban renewal program! He is suggesting that we focus on putting the very best into our mental process, to put the very best into our hearts.

So, first, we are confronted with a spiritual principle of sowing and reaping. The Bible says that what we sow we will also reap. If you are sowing trash, if you are putting spiritual filth and pollution in your heart, that is what you are going to reap. As Jesus put it, "out of the heart proceeds evil..."

What kind of books do you read? What kind of television programs do you watch? What kind of movies do you go to? What kind of conversations do you have with your friends? What kind of jokes and stories do you tell or listen to? Are you creating spiritual waste dumps in your soul? And if we do those kind of things, is it any wonder we are not growing spiritually?

But play the flip side of that question. How much are you studying and reading your Bible? How much time are you spending each day in prayer? How often are you discussing the deep spiritual things of God with your spouse or with fellow Christians? How many books of a spiritual nature have you read? You see, what you sow is what you reap.

And how about your children? I was talking to a member of our church the other day who lives in a section of town where the public schools are not very adequate educationally. As a result that family has the children in Catholic schools. He said to me, "The children are in

The Bible says that out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. Are there such things in your heart this morning? Are there things in your heart that you would be ashamed for Jesus to know about this morning? Are there dark thoughts, evil deeds, that possess you? The Bible says that whatever is true or honorable or just or pure or lovely or gracious or worthy of praise, to think about that. Yes, what we need to grow spiritually is to keep our eyes on the master's face.

Let me ask you this morning: Is God satisfied with you as you are this morning? Are you even satisfied with you this morning? And if God isn't satisfied with you--if He isn't satisfied with your spiritual growth and development--is it because of a polluted heart?