**Guard your heart 9 Feb 2020**

I asked that question this morning because

Jesus said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”

([Matthew 12:34](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=mt+12:34)).

There’s an old fashioned saying, “What’s down in the well comes up in the bucket.”

i.e. If you want to know what is in your heart….

 just listen to what escapes out of your mouth.

I came across a very challenging fact last week ….

According to sociologists, even the most isolated individual will influence 10,000 other people during his or her lifetime!

….You and I are going to influence at least 10,000 other people in our lifetime & probably significantly more.

This year we as a church will have more influence in the town and surrounding areas than we have ever had

In addition to the influence we have through our jobs and everyday relationships

* the new stage in the life of the church, with the coffee shop at the hub is opening up more opportunities for the church to serve and reach out to others

What I want us to ask ourselves this morning =

Q = what will those who come seeking hope……..find?

Q = what will those who come seeking love……..find?

Q = what will those who come seeking acceptance……..find?

Q = what will those who come seeking Jesus……..find?

Q = If we consider our lives, when people relate to us, what do they find?

Isaiah 12 speaks of the **wells of salvation.**

i.e. Once you meet Jesus, the wells of salvation spring up inside you.

Jesus said “Indeed the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” John 4: 14

I’d like you to picture a fountain with lots of spouts in it where the water can come springing out from. (SLIDE 1)

Now picture what happens when

1. something like a stone blocks one of the holes

 – too much water will come gushing out of the other holes (SLIDE 2) and the fountain will become lopsided, unbalanced, distorted

I’m sure we’ve all met someone who’s view of life or of God is distorted in some way because of something negative that’s happened to them

Now imagine another fountain

1. where stones have been thrown in and been allowed to remain.

Eventually they build up around the fountain, (SLIDE 3) and the life flow of water can become completely blocked or only a trickle may get out.

I’m sure we can identify with that too, where someone has said something horrible about us, or we’ve been suffered in some way and it’s stolen our joy or affected our relationship with God or with other people

The thing about stones, is that they muddy the water.

* what comes out of our hearts then isn’t the pure, right, compassionate truth that God desires but it’s muddied by the experience of what that stone represents

There are many parables in the Bible of situations which don’t seem fair

* the parable of the workers in the vineyard

This man started work early in the morning and agreed to work all day for 1 denarius. Others started later and finally the last man came by at 5 in the afternoon and only worked the last couple of hours – but they all got paid the same money.

* The parable of the talents

Where the man that was only given one talent had it taken away from him and it was given to the guy who already had 10!

When Jesus delayed going to his best friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus when he heard that Lazarus was ill and Lazarus died!

“Resentment, jealousy, grief, pain, believing God let you down”

* life is full of circumstances that can affect us.

God gave me a very short and specific scripture for this morning

 **“Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life” Provers 4:23**

The Bible describes Job as blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil

* yet God allowed the devil to take his health, his wife, his kids, his income, his savings, his reputation ..…he lost absolutely everything

This was Job’s response, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The Bible says “ In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”

Why?

A = because he guarded his heart and refused to let all the boulders that came his way, remain and block up that well spring of life.

 (SLIDE 4)

* This is what God wants our hearts to be like - a flow of clean, pure, life giving water that refreshes others, sustains others, saves lives of others

We all know Christians that are like that…….you talk to them or read their books and feel revived, loved, from their hearts flow the wellspring of life

These are :

* Not people who have had pain free lives – Joyce Meyer
* Often they have suffered – Corrie Ten Boon
* But they have guarded their hearts to make sure their circumstance doesn’t distort their faith in God or their love for others

I’ve said before that I learn through experience.

A few weeks ago some friends came to see me about another friend who was struggling and I had no patience for it. And I surprised myself at how intolerant I was of the situation.

Last week during the worship time, God showed me that I was holding resentment in my heart towards someone else because they’d hurt me, and that resentment was like a great big boulder which was blocking the life that God wanted to flow through me.

* We can’t stop ourselves from being hurt but we can stop ourselves from allowing resentment in.
* We can’t prevent a loved one dying or a financial injustice or turnover a decision in work where you’re over looked and someone else gets what you deserve. But we do have control over what emotions we allow into our hearts.

We can’t change what others may do to us or what life throws at us but we can choose how we respond or react to those things.

God says ‘Guard your hearts, because from it flows the wellspring of life’

The longer you are a Christian the harder it is to remove the boulders because they get lodged and they become familiar to us

* But they distort our thoughts and opinions.
* They distort how we relate to others - how tolerant we are, how patient, how critical

God wants the fruit of the Holy Spirit to grow in our lives

(love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control)

and for that he needs good soil in our hearts not soil full of rocks and boulders.

and he wants that for us but also for all those people who will come here looking to find something different from what they experience in the world

i.e. when they come here to looking for Jesus

Conclusion

I believe God has given me this sermon today because it’s an important year for us as a church. More and more people will be coming to find life here, to find the giver of life, to find healing and wholeness and truth

And God is giving us an opportunity today to get rid of the stones that have lodged in our hearts, because he needs his church, to reflect him, so his life can flow out of us.

We’re going to take communion

* Please before you come out, ask God to show you anything he wants to remove or heal in your heart and ask him to do that
* If you want prayer, I will pray with you