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Filling Our Hearts With The Things Of God

MATTHEW 12:43-45

Introduction

1. As many of you may or may not know, because of last year's flood, we still have houses in various states of disrepair or rebuilding.
2. There are some houses that have been mucked out:
 - a. The sheetrock, insulation and sub-floor have been removed.
 - b. Each has been treated for mold and now awaits restoration.
3. We all long for these houses to be finished, for furniture, appliances and bedding to fill the rooms once again.
4. We look forward to the day when their owners will move back in, when joy and laughter will again issue from within.
5. On one occasion, Jesus spoke about a house that had been swept and put in order, but was unoccupied.
6. In this parable, which we find in Matthew 12:43-45, he addresses the need to make sure it is filled with the right things.
7. If left empty, it's final condition could ultimately be worse than its initial condition.
8. Let's look at these verses tonight as we seek to learn the importance of filling our hearts with the things of God.

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I. The Danger Of An Empty Home

A. OUR HEART IS LIKE A HOME

1. All of us want our homes to be places where we can rest and feel secure.

2. However, we know there are things which find their way into our homes which make us feel insecure.
 - a. We are always alarmed when we find evidence of various pests (i.e., mice, roaches, bedbugs, etc.)
 - b. The various cleaners and solvents which are harmful if left within the reach of small children.
3. Just like our homes, our hearts must be protected.

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” (Proverbs 4:23, NASB95)

4. Harmful things can take up residence in our hearts if we are not careful.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.” (**Matthew 15:19, NASB95**)

5. Our hearts, like our homes can also be filled with good things.

“The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what it good . . .” (Matthew 12:35a).

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B. WHEN WE COME TO CHRIST, OUR HOME (HEART) IS CLEANSED

1. The writer of the letter to the Hebrew Christians describes it this way — “having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).
2. In Acts 15:8-9, Peter referenced the obedience of Cornelius and his household to the gospel and said that God had “cleansed their hearts by faith.”

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C. GOD EXPECTS US TO FILL OUR HEARTS WITH GOOD THINGS

1. According to the apostle Paul in Galatians 4:6, “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”

2. In Ephesians 3:16-17, Paul indicated that God strengthens us with power through His Spirit in our inner man, “so that Christ may dwell in [our] hearts through faith.”
3. In addition to both of these things, Paul encouraged the Christians in Colosse to “let the peace of Christ rule in [our] hearts” (Colossians 3:15).

Slide 5**D. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DO NOT FILL OUR HOMES IN SUCH A WAY?**

1. Long ago, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, was noted for saying, “Nature abhors a vacuum.”
2. In other words, every space in nature longs to be filled with something.
3. In the parable which Jesus tells here in Matthew’s gospel, “the unclean spirit” says to itself, “I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first” (Matthew 12:44-45).
4. If we do not make the effort to fill our hearts with good things, evil things are likely to return with a vengeance.
5. In the apostle Paul’s first letter to the Christians in Corinth, he reminded them that though they had been guilty of various sins in the past, they had been “washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).
6. Sadly, by the time he wrote his second letter, he was afraid he would find they had drifted back into “the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they [had] practiced” in the past (2 Corinthians 12:21).
7. Peter remembered Jesus’ statement, “the last state of that man becomes worse than the first” and applied it to the false teachers in the churches of Asia Minor (2 Peter 2:20).

Slide 6**II. How Do We Go About Filling Our Home (Heart) With Good Things?****Slide 7****A. WE SANCTIFY CHRIST AS LORD IN OUR HEARTS**

“but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;” (1 Peter 3:15, NASB95)

1. The word “sanctify” means to “set apart.”
2. As Christians, you and I are to carve out a special place in our hearts where we enthrone Christ and make Him Lord of all.
3. Only then will we be ready “to make a defense to anyone who asks [us] for a reason for the hope that is in [us].”
4. If Christ doesn’t have a permanent throne in our heart, then we have left room for Satan to begin setting up his own furniture.

Slide 8**B. BE SELECTIVE ABOUT WHAT YOU ALLOW TO FILL YOUR MIND**

1. We should keep worthless things from our eyes (Psalm 101:3-4).

“I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;
It shall not fasten its grip on me.
A perverse heart shall depart from me;
I will know no evil.”

(Psalm 101:3–4, NASB95)

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2. Instead, we should set our mind on . . .
 - a. things above (Colossians 3:1-2)

“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

(Colossians 3:1–2, NASB95)

b. things that are good and wholesome (Philippians 4:8)

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” (Philippians 4:8, NASB95)

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3. Fill it with God’s Word, through study, meditation and song:

a. Study (1 Peter 2:2)

“like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,” (1 Peter 2:2, NASB95)

b. Meditation (Psalm 1:2; 25:5; 63:6)

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:2, NASB95)

“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day.” (Psalm 25:5, NASB95)

“When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches,” (Psalm 63:6, NASB95)

c. Song (Colossians 3:16)

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

(Colossians 3:16, NASB95)

Consider the hymn, “Sing To Me Of Heaven”

First stanza:

**Sing to me of Heaven, sing that song of peace
From the toils that bind me it will bring release
Burdens will be lifted that are pressing so
Showers of great blessing o'er my heart will flow**

Third stanza:

**Sing to me of Heaven, tenderly and low
Till the shadows o'er me rise and swiftly go
When my heart is weary, when the day is long
Sing to me of Heaven, sing that old, sweet song**

Chorus:

**Sing to me of Heaven, let me fondly dream
Of its golden glory, of its pearly gleam
Sing to me when shadows of the evening fall
Sing to me of heaven, sweetest song of all**

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4. We must choose our friends carefully, they will either help us be strong or hinder our efforts (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33).

“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” (Proverbs 13:20, NASB95)

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Corinthians 15:33, NASB95)

Conclusion

1. What is the condition of your heart tonight?
2. Are you filling it with things that are good, uplifting and heaven focused?
 - a. If so, then may God bless you and keep you heavenward bound.

- b. If not, please know that just as the man in Jesus' parable, your heart could become far worse than it was before you obeyed the Gospel.
- 3. Have you experienced the initial cleansing of your soul?
 - a. Have you been washed in the soul cleansing blood of Jesus Christ?
 - b. If not, please don't put it off any longer. The longer Satan has to put His furniture in your heart, the harder it will be to break free of His grip on your soul.

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- c. I leave you with the words of Ananias to Saul, long ago, in the city of Damascus: "... what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16, NIV84).