

Open: Valley of Vision, pg 36

Big idea: The content of our words reveals the condition of our hearts.

Intro –

Some of the scariest words you might hear come from the mouth of a doctor.

You have cancer, you have a tumor, you have a heart condition. Life changes in a moment like that, especially if you don't see it coming. But a good doctor speaks the truth about your condition.

Jesus lands a similar blow in this passage. He identifies a heart condition that might be lurking but we are unaware of it.

But you might ask your doctor, "How do you know there is a problem?"

He might say, "I've run these blood tests, you have shortness of breath and often feel weak, you have an irregular heartbeat."

Jesus does something similar. He identifies observable symptoms that indicate a problem with our heart, our inner being.

1. A simple **parable** (12:33)

- a. Connection to the unforgiveable sin – their words of blasphemy against the Spirit, attributing to Satan the work of the Spirit, reveal the condition of their heart.
 - i. They don't really want people to be healed, if it means adjusting their idea about the Messiah and perhaps losing religious control over the people.
 - ii. Jesus spoke perhaps His hardest words of warning, and now He continues it by exposing the truth about their hearts.
- b. He uses a simple parable – the fruit on a tree reveals what kind of tree it is.
 - i. Uses a similar parable in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7.
 - ii. **Matthew 7:16** "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.
 - iii. This has the benefit of being very obvious, which the best types of parables are. They take something that makes perfect sense and apply the analogy to something that Jesus wants to explain on a spiritual level.
 - iv. When we moved into our house 4 ½ years ago, there was one large tree in the backyard that I couldn't identify. It was late spring when we bought the house so the tree didn't have any leaves but it was very twiggy and didn't look great. I thought it might be a Siberian elm that we have all over town and they are kind of a weed tree, not very strong or desirable. I pruned it though it looked ok. The next year I tried to identify it by looking online and in some tree identification books. I thought it might be a different type of elm, something more desirable, because of the large leaves and the particular shape of the leaves. Then the next year it fruited for the first time. They were white and the size of large blackberries and were so thick they almost broke

some of the branches. I took some pictures and added that information to a Facebook group. With the added info about the fruit, it was easily identified as a white mulberry.

- c. One aspect of this may be challenging them to make up their minds about Him.
 - i. MacArthur – “you must make up your minds about Me and My work. Either I am evil and do evil work, or else I am good and do good work. I cannot be evil and do good work or be good and do evil work. If I do good works, it is by God’s power; and if I do evil works, it is by Satan’s. God empowers nothing evil, and Satan empowers nothing good.”
 - ii. In other words, they could not attack what he did (the fruit) so they attacked who he was (the tree).
 - iii. To say that the things He is doing are good, but that He is bad or he is a tool of Satan, doesn’t make any sense.
 - iv. Who Jesus *is* must be determined by what he *does*. (Hendriksen)

2. A personal **application** to the Pharisees (12:34a)

- a. Another mini-metaphor - Brood of vipers – snakes – 3x in Matthew, once spoken by John the Baptist, twice by Jesus.
 - i. Vipers have venom in their bites, these men have poison in their words
 - ii. Vipers were not only deadly, they were deceptive. They often blended into their environments, camouflaged like the sticks and rocks around them.
 - 1. Think of Paul on the island of Malta in Acts 28 when he was bit by a viper as he put sticks in the fire. The people expected him to fall down dead, which tells you how poisonous and deadly these snakes are.
 - iii. Ups the seriousness of Jesus’ charge to them – not just bad trees with bad fruit, but snakes.
- b. Labels them as evil
- c. Questions how they could speak something good – their fruit is revealing their root, their hearts.
- d. Can someone who is not a believer speak some good words – words of kindness, words of wisdom in a particular field, some truth about life? Sure.
- e. We have to define what is “good.”
 - i. The context focuses on words about Jesus. Their view of Him reflects what is in their hearts.
 - ii. Their very view of what it takes to please God was fundamentally flawed, so any words about that are flawed.
 - iii. **Matthew 23:15** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."
 - iv. The same Jesus who called the weary to come because his yoke is easy and his burden is light, who is gentle and lowly, who promised not to crush a bruised reed, lit into the Pharisees with righteous anger because their false religion loaded people down with expectations they could not keep and doomed them to hell.

3. A broader **principle** (12:34b-35)

- a. General truism that broadens out Jesus' pointed attack, and may step on our toes a little more.
- b. The heart is used of the control center for the person. It's our inner life, not just our emotions or feelings. It includes emotions but extends out to our thinking as well.
- c. The words we say don't just pop out of thin air.
 - i. Sometimes it might feel that way and we might say, "I don't know where that came from! I didn't mean that!" And sometimes we can really mean that we didn't explain ourselves clearly, which can be accurate.
 - ii. Or we might say, "That's not me. That's not really who I am."
 - iii. Jesus says otherwise. In fact, it's particularly our "careless words" that most reveal who we are.
- d. **Matthew 15:18-19** ¹⁸ "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.
- e. **Job 32:18-20** ¹⁸ "For I am full of words; The spirit within me constrains me. ¹⁹ "Behold, my belly is like unvented wine, Like new wineskins it is about to burst. ²⁰ "Let me speak that I may get relief; Let me open my lips and answer.
 - i. After Elihu waited long and impatiently for three older friends to convince Job of his sin, he could hold back no longer. He had to say what was on his heart. (Mac)
- f. **Proverbs 23:7a** For as he thinks within himself, so he is.
- g. What we treasure in our hearts, in our inner man, in our inner life, simply comes out in our words.
 - i. Treasure – thesaurus – we get thesaurus, a treasury of words. A person's heart is the treasury of his thoughts, ambitions, desires, loves, attitudes, and loyalties.
- h. The specific, immediate context is referring to the Pharisees. The broader principle hits every one of us, whether we are saved or not.
- i. Our words are downstream from our hearts, to change the metaphor from trees and treasures to a river.
 - i. If you spend the day rehashing the ways your spouse has failed you recently, including their motives that you believe you see with the clarity of a high definition flatscreen, what words will you use towards them at night? What will the tone be like? Body language? Your thoughts at 10 am affect your words at 6 pm.
 - ii. If you want to grow in kindness in your words, consider what you are treasuring in your heart.
 - 1. Selfishness? Pride? A continual sense of being slighted or wronged?
 - 2. Or reflecting on God's kindness to you, God's forgiveness of you when undeserved.
- j. James also identifies the desires of the heart as the source of conflicts
 - i. **James 4:1-2** What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

- ii. Paul Tripp, *War of Words*, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your lack of skill in conflict resolution? You want to avoid conflicts, but you haven't learned the strategies and techniques to be successful at it. No, James goes in a radically different direction. He directs us to examine our own hearts."
 - iii. Whatever controls your heart will control your words.
 - 1. Overwhelming desire for academic excellence, financial success, recognition, comfort, respect, love.
 - iv. Tripp – two drawer system – Love God and love your neighbor
 - 1. **Matthew 22:37-40** And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' ³⁸ 'This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ 'The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' ⁴⁰ 'On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'"
 - 2. Jesus says you can boil all of the teaching of scripture down to two areas: love for God and love for people. And there is an order of importance here: love for God is foundation to everything else.
 - 3. Two drawers in God's filing cabinet – "love for God" and "love for neighbor." Everything scripture teaches can be filed in one of these drawers. Our mistake has been to treat the issue of communication as if it were a drawer two issue exclusively. When we deal with communication problems in marriage and family, parenting, friendship, community, church body, too often we turn immediately to commands and principles without examining the passages that address the heart behind the principles. ...Communication is both a drawer one and drawer two issue. If we don't deal with what we really love, with what really rules our hearts, we will never be able to speak to one another in the way God has called us to speak.
 - 4. Back to the heart condition analogy, if the doctor identifies your heart problem and points to the symptoms of shortness of breath when you exercise, can you solve it by simply taking deeper breathes or stopping exercise? Of course not!
 - 5. That may be discouraging. Now instead of one problem (your words), you have two problems (your words and your heart). But it's God's kindness to expose the root of our problems. As He convicts, He gives grace to change. He wounds so He can heal.
 - k. If we want to respond to life in a Biblical way, then need to treasure Biblical truth.
 - i. **Psalms 119:11** Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.
 - ii. Literally means to store up his words, as in a treasury or storehouse. Similar word used in Genesis 41 of Joseph storing up food for the impending famine that would come on the land.
- 4. A warning of **judgment** (12:36-37)
 - a. We will give an account for our careless words.
 - i. Careless words are those we speak without paying real attention, the ones that seem to burst out unthinkingly. Aren't those the words that most reveal what is in our hearts? It's easy to prepare a speech or a compliment and have it sound good. But the careless words most clearly bubble up from within.

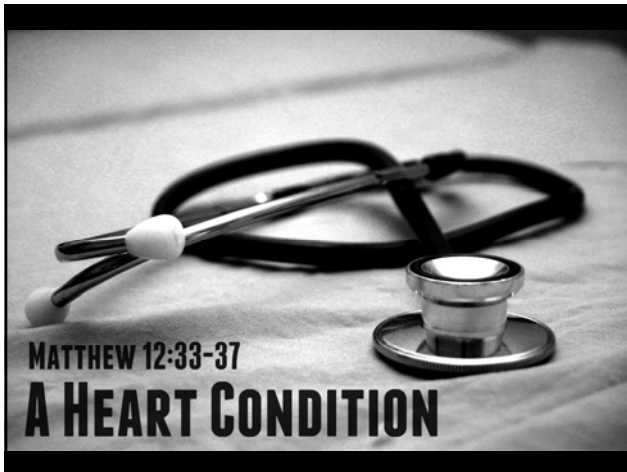
- ii. Notice the meticulousness of this statement. Every word. Every careless word, is heard by God and we will need to give an account for it.
 - iii. Narrows back in to a specific application of this principle.
 - 1. Not to improving human relationships and speech but to future judgment before God.
 - iv. Imagine a scene – standing before God and He says, “Why should I let you in to heaven?” And you say, “I’ve been a pretty good person, treated people well.”
 - v. And He says to an angel, “Roll the tape.”
 - 1. Starting with childhood and the harsh mocking words used against your sister, the kid you bullied in middle school, the prideful exaggerations in your teenage years . . .
 - 2. How long would you be able to listen and still claim innocence? I wouldn’t be able to listen long.
 - vi. Think that sounds unrealistic?
 - 1. **Revelation 20:12** And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.
 - 2. **Revelation 20:15** And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
 - b. The believer would not be able to claim that their words are without sin. That wouldn’t be the defense. The believer could only say, “You have every right to condemn me. My only hope is Jesus.”
 - c. We need a new heart, and that’s just what God can give us.
 - i. **Ezekiel 36:26-27** ²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.
 - ii. **Psalms 51:10** Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
5. Big idea: The content of our words reveals the condition of our hearts.
- a. This is, first, a passage about conversion.
 - i. Humans have a fatal heart condition and we need a transplant.
 - ii. **1 John 4:20** ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.
 - b. Secondly, there is profound instruction for all of us who care about the content of our words.
 - i. Ask God to search your heart and reveal issues of the heart that are overflowing in your words.

Communion:

We sing about the gospel – God’s holiness and our need for it supplied by Christ

We read about it, talk about it

Now we experience a profound visual and tangible object lesson – as the Christian takes communion – we are declaring and remembering that our union with Christ is our hope for our heart condition.



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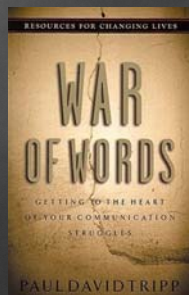
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