

Filling the Void

Matthew 12:43-45

Introduction

1. Jesus healed a demon possessed man, and received 2 very different reactions – **Matthew 12:23-24**
 - a. Jesus dismantled the accusation by the Pharisees, and challenged them and everyone present with a choice – **Matthew 12:30**
 - b. After exposing the heart of the Pharisees with His rebuttal, and following rebuke, they shamelessly pretended to seek truth – **Matthew 12:38-39** – Jesus sees through them and rebukes them again.
2. Jesus continued His rebuke and warning to the Pharisees, while simultaneously warning the crowd and encouraging them to commit to the inescapable conclusions His miracles and teachings were leading them to. He did this by speaking a parable – **Matthew 12:43-45**
 - a. The parable demonstrates the danger of trying to remain neutral (**v. 30**) when presented facts demand commitment or departure.
 - b. The exorcism of the demon in the parable represents expulsion of mistaken views of the Messiah which led to the Pharisees conclusion (**v. 24**).
 - c. The return of the demon with 7 others worse than himself represents the destructive nature of being awakened to mistakes and errors by the presentation of the truth only to remain neutral.
3. The bible presents a pattern of spiritual growth which cannot be challenged or suspended.
 - a. The truth removes – ignorance, mistaken notions, mistaken actions, etc.
 - b. The truth demands addition – accepted knowledge, adapted notions, changed actions, etc.
 - c. If the presentation of truth convicts us of what is opposite in our hearts and lives, we cannot ignore it and remain neutral. Such will make things worse than they were before.
 - d. We must fill the void with what is right and true, allowing it to transform us for God's glory.
- I. The Danger of Void
 - A. Space for Potential Evil
 - a. The scripture is silent concerning a continued existence of a neutral, empty spiritual state:
 - i. ***“he finds it empty...he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there” (Matthew 12:44-45).***
 - ii. Always speaks of two antithetical states – **cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-16**
 - iii. There is no neutrality – **cf. Matthew 12:30** – not choosing a side defaults to the negative side.

- iv. ONE CANNOT REMAIN EMPTY. THE VOID WILL BE FILLED BY SOMETHING.
 - 1. Righteousness – takes a concerted effort.
 - 2. Unrighteousness – does not necessarily take effort but can creep in through idleness.
 - a. **Cf. Ephesians 5:15-16** – the days are evil, so the opportunity that is life must be used to pursue God’s will, else evil will creep in.
- v. If there is no effort to be filled with good, then evil will inevitably fill the void.

B. A Cold Hard Heart

- a. Zeal for God must be fed and pursued – **Revelation 2:4-5** (Ephesians – left first love)
- b. Zeal only occurs when the heart is actively filled with God’s word in knowledge and practice.
- c. When such is not pursued – **Hebrews 5:12; 6:4-6** – they had not been diligent in filling themselves with God’s word and grew cold and were in danger of falling way.
- d. Furthermore:
 - i. **Matthew 12:45** – last state worse than the first.
 - ii. When such goodness from the Lord is known then rejected only to be replaced with what had originally been escaped a man has reached a state worse than he was before the gospel – **2 Peter 2:20-22**

II. Filling the Void

A. Sanctify the Lord in Your Heart

- a. **1 Peter 3:15** – Christ (NASB) must be set apart in our hearts.
 - i. Must be put on the throne of our heart.
 - ii. Sanctifying the Lord isn’t accomplished merely verbally – **Luke 6:46; John 14:15** – must follow in outward manifestation.
- b. Denotes a predisposition – **Acts 17:11** – like the Bereans.
 - i. Readiness – *prothymia* – “exceptional interest in being of service, willingness, readiness, goodwill” (BDAG)
 - ii. “*pro*, ‘forward,’ *thumos*, ‘mind, disposition,’” (VINE)
 - iii. Denotes a mind that is ready to act – the Bereans were ready to act on the teaching of Paul and Silas if it were in accord with what they knew to be true (OT).
- c. Cannot abound without first sanctifying the Lord in our hearts – **cf. Colossians 2:6-7** (received – accepted, given self to, yielded to preeminent one)

B. Exercise Caution

- a. We must keep our hearts with diligence – **Proverbs 4:23**
 - i. Not only CAN we guard what our heart takes in (ability – free-will), but we have the OBLIGATION/RESPONSIBILITY to do so.

- b. We have to be selective in what we consume every day. There are no “little things,” but all will have some kind of effect on us.
 - i. Careful analysis of all things is necessary lest something take us by surprise.
- c. Like David – **Psalm 101:3-4**
- d. Like Job – **Job 31:1**
- e. Requires sobriety and vigilance – **1 Peter 5:8**
 - i. What things will we meditate (ponder – think long) on? – **Philippians 4:8**
 - ii. Sometimes our minds can wander and often that can lead to bad things. We must be on guard about this and filter our thoughts.
- C. Make Opportunities to Study
 - a. The concept of diligence – **2 Timothy 2:15**
 - i. More than simply regularly scheduled worship services and bible studies – individual diligence.
 - ii. Diligent – *spoudazō* – “to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation, be zealous/eager, take pains, make every effort, be conscientious.” (BDAG)
 - b. Develop a thirst – **1 Peter 2:1-3**
 - c. Redeem the time – **Ephesians 5:15-16** (Time – in the sense of season – whole life as a Christian)
 - i. Such requires conscientious planning to include times set aside for study.
 - ii. BUDGETING TIME.
- D. Worship Faithfully
 - a. Not forsaking the assembly – **Hebrews 10:24-25**
 - i. This should be more than simply a rote appearance.
 - ii. There should be deliberation, and thoughtfulness.
 - b. Includes a mind cultivated to thirst for such spiritual activity with those of like-precious faith – **Psalm 122:1**
 - i. **If this is true there will be an eagerness about, and diligent effort to attend EXTRA worship periods – Sunday all 3 hours, Wednesday PM, Gospel Meetings.**
 - c. Faithful worship implies a participation of an engaged mind:
 - i. Singing – **Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-19**
 - ii. Lord’s Supper – **1 Corinthians 11:28-29**
 - iii. Preaching – **Acts 17:11**
 - iv. Praying – **1 Corinthians 14:15**
 - v. Giving – **2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:7**
- E. Maintain Good Company and Avoid Evil Company
 - a. Especially concerning time away from the assembly.
 - b. **1 Corinthians 15:33** – evil company is corrupting in nature.
 - c. **Romans 12:9** – abhorring evil and clinging to good will manifest itself in the company we hold.

- i. **Proverbs 8:13** – fear of Lord to hate evil.
- ii. **Psalms 97:10** – instruction to hate evil.
- d. If we are filling our time with evil company, it will begin to fill us with the same habits.
- e. We must be around those who hold the same beliefs and values in order to be influenced in the right direction – **Proverbs 27:17**

Conclusion

1. When we have grown by a subtraction of sin from our lives through the forgiveness God offers, we must not neglect to pursue growth by adding God's will to our heart.
2. When a void is left it will inevitably be filled. But if it is not filled by our diligent effort in doing God's will then it will be filled with the opposite.