

How's Your Heart?

Today is **Week 4** of **The Word Made Flesh** and we are in the process of making our way through the Gospel section of the NT really trying to drill down on what it means to be a Disciple of Jesus. Over the last couple of weeks we have been talking about the Attitudes we must have if we want to be Salt & Light in our community. Of course we are talking about the attitudes outlined for us in **Matthew 5** (the attitudes of Humility, Meekness, Righteousness, Mercy, Purity and Peacemaker). Just last week we looked at **Luke 9:23** and the Three Commitments Jesus said we must have if we truly want to be His disciple (the commitments of denying self, taking up our cross daily, and the willingness to keep our eyes on Him). The reality being we cannot see the attitudes of Matthew 5 (The Beatitudes) manifested in our lives until we are willing to posture ourselves in such a way so as to allow God to transform our heart attitudes. So today, as we continue with our theme of what it means to truly follow Jesus I want us to do so by evaluating our heart. Heart motives reveal the real reason we are doing what we are doing and as a disciple of Jesus it is important for us to constantly evaluate our heart motives allowing Him the ability to probe, expose, and remove the things that either keep us from receiving His salvation, make us a stumbling block to someone else, or are hindering us from experiencing His abundant life. So with that said, will you turn with me to Mark 10 as we look at **FIVE HEART MOTIVES** that will **SABOTAGE** God's work in our lives.

Mark 10:1-12 (NIV) 1 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. Jesus has been ministering in Capernaum (North West Region of Galilee). As Mark 10 begins He is making his way southward toward Jerusalem where he will begin to make His way to the cross.

2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, which means their motivation was not pure in its intent. Their goal was to trick Jesus into denying the Law of Moses so they could label him as a false prophet. And so they ask, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" This issue has always been a tricky one even in Jesus' day. The passage in question was from **Deuteronomy 24:1** which says, "*When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house.*" In Jesus' day there were two schools of thought regarding this passage. Some of the religious leaders believed that "uncleanness" meant sexual immorality and believed that this was the only valid reason a person was allowed to divorce. But there were other leaders who understood *uncleanness* to mean *any* sort of discretion, even to the point of burning the breakfast as being valid grounds for a divorce. (Btw, this last one was pretty cold y'all.) Notice Jesus' response. **3** "What did Moses command you?" he replied. **4** They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." I want you to take note that Jesus asks what was "commanded". Which means we have to do it if it is commanded by God. They responded by saying Moses "permitted" it. Which is different from command. "Command" is absolute, whereas "permitted" is allowed, but doesn't mean you have to do it. Notice what Jesus says next. **5** "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. **6** "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' **7** 'For this reason a man will leave his father and

mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” 10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” In other words, God never intended divorce as an option based on His created design. Here’s the deal. Even though the law allowed for divorce in some instances it was only allowed because of mankind’s hard heart. God never intended it to be so. Divorce, even for reasons allowed, has huge consequences as anyone who has been divorced can attest to. There are all kinds of fall out emotionally, spiritually and physically. There are even all kinds of reasons for divorce. An unbelieving spouse who does not want to be married anymore. A spouse who is abusive. A spouse who has an addiction and is unwilling to get help and thus is harming his family. Sexual immorality. I find it interesting that Jesus doesn’t really resolve the issue except to state very clearly how God feels about divorce and marriage. As far as Jesus is concerned the real issue isn’t what is legal or permissible. The real issue is why do you ask such a question in the first place? The motive behind such a question is the real issue. And this leads us to the first heart motive that will sabotage God’s work in your life.

Beware of a heart that is looking for a LOOPHOLE to justify SIN! Rather than asking how close to sin can I dance and still be ok with God let’s ask a better question. Let’s ask, **Given my situation, what is the decision that will help me follow Jesus more fully?** Or better yet, **What decision will bring Him greater glory?** Outward obedience with a wayward heart is a dangerous thing. Can we all agree, no matter what the reason, divorce sucks? Can we all agree that the better and more beautiful depiction of marriage as God established it would be for every marriage to be a bond for life with two people committed to each other no matter what? As a result, divorce is a product of sin no matter what the reason! It is the product of a broken world with many issues that can be very complex and filled with all kinds of ugly scenarios. I believe that is why Jesus really doesn’t address the two schools of thought on divorce regarding the debate of his day because He knows if He makes a legalistic statement regarding the issue listing all the situations where divorce is allowed, our wicked hearts would look for loopholes to try and justify our behavior in a given scenario rather than press into God and allow the Holy Spirit to really transform our heart on the issue. The heart of our obedience should not be based on, **What is allowed by law?**, but instead it should be, **Which decision best honors God?**

Let me speak to those in the house who have been divorced. If you have been divorced and you feel guilty about that, lay it at Jesus’ feet and seek His forgiveness and peace. I don’t know the specifics of your situation but what is already done is done. But here is what I do know about Jesus. No matter where you are or what you have done there is forgiveness and peace to be found if you are willing to acknowledge your brokenness and seek His face. He doesn’t want you to live in perpetual guilt! For others, maybe your peace would be found in reconciliation with the other party, if that is even still possible. It takes two to reconcile, but even if that isn’t possible you can still forgive the other party for what they have done to you. Maybe you are in a situation where you are currently thinking about or seeking divorce. Before you do, I encourage you to seek godly counsel and pray about your next step very carefully. If you need to talk with someone our pastors are available and would love the opportunity to talk with you and pray for

you as you try to decide what God would have you do. God is a God of reconciliation and would much rather see reconciliation take place in any broken relationship. Too many people take the quick out of divorce and never really stop to seek God's face through the process. If you are currently single, ask God to lead you into your next relationship with the understanding that divorce is never to be an option. If you can't enter a relationship with that mindset, don't get married. **Beware of a heart that is looking for a LOOPHOLE to justify SIN!** Mark continues.

Mark 10:13-16 (NIV) 13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. **14** When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **15** Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." **16** And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. It is here that we see the second heart motive that will sabotage God's work in your life.

Beware of a heart void of CHILDLIKE FAITH! Notice what Jesus says about FAITH. In order to have a FAITH that saves you need a childlike faith. Children, in their innocence before they become jaded and hardened by life disappointments and experiences in this world, are very accepting and believing of everything in life. They are not skeptical like us adults; they accept things at face value without question. When they do ask questions they do so to understand rather than ask questions to test or trick us. They genuinely seek to know things and they are eager to learn. They are very trusting. Some would call that being gullible. Jesus calls that faith. Children are moldable. You can teach them and shape them because they trust you. This is the kind of faith we have to have to walk with Jesus and allow Him to work through our lives. But sometimes because of our life experience in a fallen world our doubt and skepticism causes us to not trust God. We resort to defense mechanisms to prevent ourselves from being disappointed or from being taken advantage of because of hurt we have experienced in the past. We have let life harden our hearts and we tend to look at most situations with great skepticism and mistrust. When in reality we do not have to be that way with God. God is trustworthy. We can let go of our skepticism. We can be vulnerable with Him. He will not let us down. He is faithful and He will not disappoint.

Beware of a heart void of childlike faith! Beware of a heart that is looking for a LOOPHOLE to justify SIN! And here is #3...

Beware of a SELF-RELIANT HEART caused by the riches of this world

Mark 10:17-26 (NIV) 17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" This is a great question I think everyone needs to be asking. **18** "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. Jesus makes this statement not to deny His deity or equality with God the Father, but He is making the point that since there is only ONE who is good and that is God the Father are you (Jesus speaking to the man) willing to acknowledge that I am God and one with the Father? **19** You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall

not defraud, honor your father and mother. **20** “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” The rich guy is acknowledging his outward ability to keep the law, but he is not considering the issues of his heart. **21** Jesus looked at him and loved him. Even though the man was lacking one thing and loved his possessions more than he loved God, Jesus still loved him. Jesus’ love was not conditional on the man’s behavior. And guess what? Neither is His love for you. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Here again we see Jesus is more focused on the heart as opposed to the outward things he was doing. **22** At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. **23** Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” **24** The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! **25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” **26** The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Riches were considered a sign of great blessing as those without were considered cursed by God. In reality, riches can be a curse that keep us from trusting in Jesus. Riches make us self-reliant and make us feel like we don’t need God. Riches can also become an idol of our heart as we look to our riches instead of God. The rich man had done just that. He had made his wealth an idol and it was this idol that Jesus was trying to expose. In reality, he may have never bowed to a false god or idol outwardly but on the inside his heart was guilty of idol worship. For those of us who live in America, we are the rich man! Especially when we compare ourselves with the world. How many of us when we have plenty tend to lean on Jesus less or tend to be less hungry for God? This was the problem with this man. Jesus told him to get rid of what was keeping Him from salvation, his money. He was too reliant and dependent on it and he could not give it up therefore rather than confess that and repent, he decided to walk away from Jesus rather than follow Him. And we do the same if we allow money to become our God. Do you find yourself being more reliant on your money than you are on Jesus? Do you trust in your possessions more than you do the Lord?

Beware of a SELF-RELIANT HEART caused by the riches of this world! Beware of a heart void of CHILDLIKE FAITH! Beware of a heart that is looking for a LOOPHOLE to justify SIN! And here’s the fourth heart motive that will sabotage God’s work in your life.

Beware of a heart that seeks to ELEVATE yourself above OTHERS

Mark 10:35-45 (NIV) **35** Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask. **36** “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. **37** They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” **38** “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” **39** “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, **40** but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” **41** When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. **42** Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **43** Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **44** and

whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

True greatness is being a servant! We are not called to be served but to serve others. When you engage in the activities of the church what is your motive for doing so? Is it to get something or to give something? Is it to be blessed or be a blessing? Is it to be served or to serve others? It is hard to be a servant when we are constantly seeking to elevate ourselves. What these guys didn't know was that the true path to greatness required selflessness and sacrifice. Jesus was the true picture of greatness but his path to greatness was a path that required sacrifice for others. His cup was a cup that could only be consumed by one who was willing to lay themselves aside in order to lift others up. Of course the perfect picture of this was the cross where Jesus became the ransom for our sin. Nothing can throttle the work of God in our life quicker than elevation of self. Nothing wrong with wanting to be great. The question is what is your motive to be so? Is it for your glory or is it for God's glory? These two disciples were seeking their own glory.

Beware of a heart that seeks to ELEVATE yourself above OTHERS. Beware of a SELF-RELIANT HEART caused by the riches of this world! Beware of a heart void of CHILDLIKE FAITH! Beware of a heart that is looking for a LOOPHOLE to justify SIN! And here's the fifth and final heart motive that will sabotage God's work in your life.

Beware of a heart that is ASHAMED to call on Jesus

Mark 10:46-52 (NIV) 46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. **47** When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” **48** Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, Matthew's gospel tells us that there were two blind beggars but here in Mark's gospel he zeros in on the more vocal one. Because they were blind obviously they were unable to work therefore they were very poor and would have to resort to begging on the street for money to simply buy food and obtain basic needs. In contrast with the rich man the poor and physically lame were considered to be cursed by God. As a result, the blind man was seen as undeserving of Jesus and he was viewed as a nuisance. That is why we have the crowd telling him to be quiet. But blind Bartimaeus is unashamed to cry out for Jesus and he does so all the more louder. **48** Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” He recognized that Jesus was the Messiah because he used a common messianic title referring to Jesus as ‘Son of David’. He knew his dire situation and he believed that His only hope was Jesus and so He cried out to him all the more unashamed because he was at the lowest of lows and he had nothing else to lose. **49** Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.” **50** Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. **51** “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” **52** “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. This man did not let his inability to see keep him from calling out for Jesus or from going to Jesus. Are you letting any of your short-comings, sins, past issues, or excuses keep you from

calling out to Jesus and going to Him? There was no pride in this man! He cared not what anyone thought about him and he was very acquainted with his brokenness. He was unashamed to cry out and he was not ashamed of his neediness. If he had let pride get in the way he would have missed out on salvation and his physical healing. How many times do we let pride keep us from crying out to Jesus or acknowledging our dire need. The attitude of Blind Bartimaeus is absolutely required in order to receive salvation in Christ.

So, as you allow the Holy Spirit to examine your heart this morning, what heart motive do you need to bring captive to Jesus today? Which one or ones are sabotaging your relationship with Jesus?

Worship Team Comes Back Up

Invitation:

Do you find yourself looking for a LOOPHOLE in order to justify your SIN? Rather than ask **What is allowed by law?** Let's ask **Which decision best honors God?**

Do you have a CHILDLIKE FAITH? Remember what Jesus says, **for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.** God is trustworthy. We can let go of our doubts. We can be vulnerable with Him. He will not let us down. He is faithful and He will not disappoint. Will you trust Him?

Do you find yourself trusting in your riches more so than you are trusting in Jesus? Are your material possessions an idol of your heart? Jesus tells us **Matthew 5:19-21 (NIV) 19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Do you have a tendency to elevate yourself above others? Remember true greatness is being a servant! We are not called to be served but to serve others. Jesus is our example!

Are you ASHAMED to call on Jesus? Wherever you are, will you call on Him today? Remember even with the rich young ruler who had allowed an idol of his heart to get in the way of his relationship with Jesus, Jesus still loved him. And no matter what He loves you also! Even when the crowd thought Bartimaeus wasn't worthy of Jesus and that he should be quiet, he still cried out and Jesus received him! He is ready to receive you today, will you call on HIM?

Pray