

The Heart Is the Source of the Wellspring of Life
Sunday, October 17, 2021, 11:30 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena
The Rev. Alfredo Feregrino

As part of my Master of Divinity studies at Seattle University, I took a class on Spirituality, in that class one of the assignments was to be aware of our surroundings, to observe, to notice, to perceive, to see.

The idea was to activate our senses, our minds and pay attention to finding where God was already active in ourselves, in other people and in our world, the idea was to stop and pay attention, find ways to be attentive and aware.

So, with this intention, I went to my favorite place, Greenlake, for a walk and as I was sitting in my favorite place by the water, I started observing the trees around me, the color and the form of the leaves on those trees. I started being aware of the whispering of the wind and the ripples created as I was throwing little stones into the water.

This exercise was a great gift to find peace and feel a direct connection with the Holy.

But also I discovered something new during this process... by stopping, by observing, I also noticed that we have power that have so much potential to affect ourselves, other people and our world.

And this powerful awareness came just for paying attention.

And in the gospel that we heard today, we are invited to pay attention, to pay attention to our heart.

The gospel writer is telling us that the "The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45)

Throughout the scriptures, the word heart is used more than thousand times in the bible.

In our sacred scriptures the heart is considered the vessel, the container of life and strength.

The heart is the center of a person's life from where everything flows. The heart is the seat of our desires, our emotions, our thoughts and plans.

The heart is the origin, the roots that feed the entire tree, the mountain, which from which all the rivers flow.

In the book of Proverbs we read: "Wisdom call her children to guard their hearts because the heart is the source of the wellspring of life" (Prov 4:23)

And as a wellspring of life what we put and placed in our hearts, would define our essence and our fundamental nature.

And this fundamental nature, it shows in the way we express ourselves and communicate.

Jesus reminds us: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles. (Matt 15:11)

It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks...

Yes, the mouth reveals what is in the heart.

And what comes out of our mouths are words.

And words are a reflection of what is in our hearts.

You know what,

Words have energy and power; words have the ability to build up or tear down, encourage or manipulate, illuminate or deceive.

Words have the power to help and heal, or they can have the ability to damage, to harm and to shame.

How many times have we said, "*I take it back*" after saying things that we should not have said in the first place?

Words that devastate and damage cannot be unsaid, they can never fully be undone.

Words do something. And that's the power they have, once out of our mouths we have no more control over them.

There is a legendary Jewish wisdom folktale, that goes like this:

Once upon a time there was a man whom the entire village knew to be a gossip, and he liked to say bad things about other people.

He could not wait to share the exciting piece of gossip with whoever would listen. It did not matter to him if the stories he spread were true, or not.

One day, after hearing the rabbi speak about the harm caused to say bad things about other people, this man went to the rabbi and said, "Rabbi, I am truly sorry for all the pain I have caused with my words. I repent. Can I be forgiven?"

"Yes," replied the rabbi, "but here is what you must do.

He told him. Go home. Find a feather pillow. Open the pillow and release the feathers on the wind. Then, come back to me."

So, the man did as he was told.

When he came back, the rabbi said, "Now, go and collect all the feathers that you released from the pillow."

"But that is impossible! The man replied.

They have flown all over the place. I do not even know where most of them have traveled!"

"So it is with words my son, the rabbi replied, you do not know where your words have traveled.

Once words have been spoken, they cannot be taken back."

Yes,

It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks...

And here in the gospel that we just heard, Jesus is inviting us to pay attention. To stop, to observe, to notice.

Jesus is inviting us to look deep into our hearts because the heart is the source of the wellspring of life.

So I wonder,

Have you paid attention to the words that come out of your mouth?

The words you speak on the phone

The words that come from your keyboard?

It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks...

So, I wonder,

When you talk to others, does your conversation turn to talking in a negative way about others?

When you talk to others, do you really listen and use words of encouragement?

Do you speak kind words to your children, spouses, parents or co-workers?

It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks...

So, I wonder again,

When you go to a restaurant, coffee shop, supermarket, do you treat their workers with respect and use kind words towards them?

When you are on the phone resolving an issue with a customer service representative, are you kind to them?

There is a recent article in the Harvard Gazette of Business and Economics that mentions that there has been an increase in the mistreatment of people who work in the service industry.

The article points out that, angry customers are behaving badly over minor inconveniences — customers at dinners and coffee shops speak with anger to their waiters and baristas over slow service or menu shortages, and shoppers are upset over hard-to-find items.

The irritation of customers shouting at staff, breaking safety policies or local ordinances, even threatening or becoming violent over **trivial** matters is definitely a new trend in our new post-lockdown life.

Yes, ... It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks...

In the gospel that we heard today, we are invited to pay attention, to pay attention to our heart.

You know reflection is an interesting concept.

Think of everything you say as a mirror.

So, let's visualize a mirror.

God used words to create.

We all are created in the image and likeness of God.

In every person, we see someone whom God has created. Each of us is a complex and beautiful mystery.

So, every time we look at another person we are seeing God. Every time that we look at ourselves we are seeing God.

If we can just understand this concept of reflection, then when we insult, injure or denigrate the other, we can see that we are basically doing it to ourselves.

When we use words that hurt, to harm and to denigrate, we are doing this to ourselves. Everything is reflecting back on us.

Yes, we often forget the impact that words have.

I am sure that all of us know these things already. And we realize that we all have said things that we regret.

During this time of so much extra stress and uncertainty, it is even harder to be our best selves.

So, what can we do?

We have to stop, to pay attention, and examine our own heart

So, let me ask you a question...

What is in your heart now?

If... you feel comfortable, try this right now ... close your eyes and touch your heart.

What is in your heart? What do you see? What do you feel?

What do you find there? is there resentment, bitterness, grief, loneliness?

You may even physically feel it, a heaviness, pressure or even pain.

What is the sensation; take your time to actually feel it...

Do you feel that your heart needs healing?

If... so.... ask ...God.

Ask God to remove anything that is contaminating your heart, or you can use the simple prayer that I myself use on a daily basis "Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me." That's what I pray every day.

You can do this as many times as it takes until you feel a change.

So, ask God, to clean your heart and renew a right spirit within you. We cannot do it by ourselves.

And God will pour God's immense love into you and restore your heart.

This is God's promise:

"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you" (Ezekiel 36:26)

The heart is like the roots of a tree that feeds all its branches, the heart is like the mountain from which all the rivers flow.

So, I invite you to pay attention, to pay attention to your heart.

Because in the end our words have power to create, and to do so much good.

Because in the end, our heart is and will be always the source of the wellspring of life"

AMEN