

# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

**Date** : 2 Jul 2023

**Sermon Title** : Guard Your Heart

**Speaker** : Rev Peter Koh

**Text** : Proverbs 4:23

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Continuing from last week's sermon, we recall that what should be in our hearts is a posture of worship, humility and selflessness. It is important to have good values in our hearts and to guard it. God wants to protect us by giving us instructions on how to guard our hearts as written in Proverbs 3 and 4. In these passages we read instructions on how to live our lives; by being pure, wise and through learning to trust God. In this sermon we will focus on Proverbs 4:23, which reads "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it".

What we keep in our hearts are the very things that will flow out of our hearts. If our hearts are full of the goodness of God, then goodness would flow out of it. On the contrary, if we have evil in our hearts then evil will flow out of it and similarly envy in our hearts make us see the world with envious eyes. As reinforced in Luke 6:45, what we keep in our hearts will reveal who we are, as it determines our behaviour and our behaviour is what defines us and how we deal with the people around us.

*"The Heart directs the Life... a WELL-KEPT heart – prepared for and capable of responding to the situations of life in ways that are good and right"*

- Dallas Willard

In response, how then can we guard our heart and stay morally upright?

## **Conditions of the Heart (Parable of the Sower)**

The conditions of our heart determine how we receive the word of God and how we receive values that will make us a better person. Jesus' Parable of the Sower offers some guide that could help us assess the state of our hearts.

### **1. The Path (Hard) – Matthew 13:18-19**

A well-trodden path would get hard over time and as a result plants do not thrive on it. With this kind of hardened heart, the gospel seed that falls on this soil would not grow. A hard heart will also treat people harshly and is slow to forgive. If we have this heart let us pray and ask God to soften our hearts.

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## 2. The Rocky Place (Shallow) – Matthew 13:20-21

The gospel seed that falls amongst the rocks would grow roots but because of the rocky environment, the roots are not able to reach deep into the soil. The word will not grow fully and develop. With heart of this soil condition, our understanding of the word is shallow – we may feel we understand much about God's word, but in fact, we have less than we thought.

## 3. The Thorny Place (Crowded) – Matthew 13:22

With a heart of this soil, we are surrounded by people who distract us from God, or people who are toxic in such a way that we are tempted or distracted from continuing our spiritual journey in life. Let us pray for God to give us the ability to resist the devil and flee from temptation.

## 4. The Good Soil (Fruitful) – Matthew 13:23

This is the best condition of our heart, as the seed of the gospel can take root and grow. With this soil we can feed on the word of God as we take time to read the scriptures and build intimacy with God.

### **How to Guard our Hearts**

Having understood the importance of having a heart condition that is like a good soil to receive the word of God, how then can we protect our hearts? Since what we keep in our hearts will manifest in our behaviour as we react to the situations and people around us, here are some ways we can protect our hearts:

#### (i) Keep It Full

Our heart is like a reservoir. God wants us to fill the reservoir of our hearts with the living water and keep it full by feeding ourselves with the word of God.

#### (ii) Keep It Clean/Pure

The eyes and ears are the gateways to our hearts. Let us be mindful about what we feed our hearts with; with things from God that is pure, and not with worldly evils and temptations.

#### (iii) Keep It Peaceful

Peace is the deepest cry of our soul. All our souls want peace, and it is one common cry of the hearts of all humanity. Where can we find the perfect peace? Jesus is our Prince of Peace as He has said "Peace I leave to you, my peace I give unto you." (John 14:27) Jesus brings peace that comes from the assurance of eternal life, so that we may live. Let us remind ourselves that in Jesus Christ we have the peace of assurance of salvation. Let us respond by keeping a peaceful heart within us and not be troubled by the world.

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## (iv) Keep It Tender

Our hearts need to be kept tender and soft so the word of God can take root and flourish. A soft tender heart is a heart with compassion and sensitive to the people around us who need our help. It may be challenging to keep a tender heart especially when we may be wrongly accused even for doing good, but we know that we can depend on God to deliver and vindicate us.

## (v) Keep It Loving

We would not be able to achieve any of the above if our hearts are void of love. In 1 Cor 13, we see that "love" is described as having two characteristics: "Love is patient, love is kind". God is love and when He made us, He filled us with love. Therefore, we are made filled with patience and kindness – we must share that love with people. When our heart is loving, we can then keep it full, pure, peaceful and tender.

## **CONCLUSION**

Let us examine the condition of our hearts and reflect whether we need help from God to make it more loving, tender, peaceful, pure, and full. What is in our hearts will reflect who we truly are as we represent Christ to the people around us. Through our hearts we can love God intimately by loving people genuinely. Let us therefore guard our hearts from pollution, defilement, or worries in life and instead, let us put our whole trust in God, by allowing God to guide us to live a life that would be a witness to Him so the world around us will know God in their own special way.

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## **A. Review Sermon Application**

***Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.***

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

## **2. Read Proverbs 4:23 together.**

Reflect on your heart condition. What flows out of it in your speech and actions especially when you are troubled, stressed or provoked?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

3a. (i) How do you respond to God's Word when it is preached or when you read the Bible?

(ii) Which type of soil best represents the condition of your heart?

3b. What is one change you need to make so your heart will be good soil for the Word of God to take root and grow?

4. How has Proverbs 4:23 spoken to you?

a. What does it mean for you to guard your heart?

b. What are some challenges you face in guarding your heart?

c. How can your group members encourage you to overcome these challenges in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action**

***Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.***

5. Share your personal testimony on how you keep your heart full, clean/pure, peaceful, tender and loving despite the challenges you face in life.

OR

Give thanks to God for who He is...the God of love. And creating us in His image, filled with love so that we have a heart that is capable of showing patience and kindness to one another.

6. As a group, pray that God would grant us His wisdom and understanding to grow in His Word. Pray for your group to help each other keep the conditions of your hearts like good soil to receive God's word. Pray also that you encourage one another to guard your hearts, by filling it with love so only goodness will flow out of our hearts for the world around us to witness Christ in the way we live our lives.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Great Things – Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4CY3nf1Mvw>
2. Tabernacle – Awaken Generation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hvJiLXNqUQ>
3. Create In Me A Clean Heart – Keith Green  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZVCYgwFcRo>

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