

McCabe United Methodist Church
March 21, 2010
Matthew 7:15-20
“How Are You Doing?” A Spiritual Checkup
by Pastor Art Scanson

Checkups are a part of life. We go to doctors and dentists for periodic examinations. I am keenly aware of this as I just had my physical checkup last week. We also take our cars to a mechanic for tune-ups. Tests are given in school to see if students are really learning what they are supposed to learn. So it is with our spiritual lives, we need a checkup from time to time.

A boy went into a drugstore to use the phone. He called a lady named Mrs. Johnson.

He said, “Mrs. Johnson, do you need a good yard boy? I’m a hard worker.”

Mrs. Johnson replied, “No thank you, I already have a fine young man who takes excellent care of my yard.”

But the young boy persisted: “Does he get there on time? Does he charge a fair rate? Is he neat? Is he conscientious?”

Mrs. Johnson answered, “I do appreciate your interest, young man, but I am most pleased with the yard boy I now have. He is exceptionally good!”

The boy thanked her and hung up. The druggist had overheard the conversation and was impressed.

He said, “Wait a minute son. I didn’t know you were looking for a job. I’ll hire you! I can give you a job right here in my drugstore!”

To which the boy replied, “Oh, no, thank you. I already have a great job! You see, I am Mrs. Johnson’s yard boy. I was just checking up on myself!”

We all need a bit of that young man’s wisdom - to check up on ourselves from time to time. So let me ask us some questions for a spiritual checkup. After all, “How am I doing as a Christian! Is my lifestyle worthy to earn the name of Christian? Do I feel close to God? Does my faith work?”

Remember Jesus’ words, “You will know them by their fruits.” Read our Scripture lesson - Matthew 7:15-20.

First, Does your faith give you confidence for living? Does your faith really strengthen you? Does it give you a sense of assurance and victory? Does your faith help you stand up to life, stand up to tensions, pressures and stresses of this world? Does your faith make you hopeful, radiant, confident? That happens as we take to heart what we sing in our hymns, hear in our Church School classes, or from the pulpit. If we believe these things, then we can live with confidence.

However, if the truth be known, while we ought to know better or have more faith, we find ourselves often running scared, or finding ourselves worried about

the past, the demands of the present, and the mysteries of the future. While the Christian faith says to us that we can be confident!

Remember our God is called Emmanuel - "God with us" God will not desert us. And nothing, not even death, can separate us from God. Making it possible us to be radiantly confident. Ask yourself now: "Does my faith give me confidence for the living of these days?"

If not, pray faithfully for God to give you such faith. Visit with others Christians about their experiences of how their faith is strengthened.

Secondly, Does your faith make you more loving?

Love is the single most distinctive characteristic of the Christian faith. This then is probably the best test of your spiritual temperature. Jesus called love the most reliable sign of Christian discipleship. How is it for you? Are you more loving now than you were last year at this time?

Psychologist Robert Minniear was being interviewed on television. He said something that is fascinating. "If you really want to be happy, then pretend for one month that every person you meet is the most important person in the world—that is, relate to everybody you see as if he or she were the most important person in the world!"

As I read about this, I thought, "That's a good idea." And it sparked the reminder that for the Christian we are called to treat every person we meet as if he or she were Christ himself! Jesus said it this way, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me." So it is only fitting that we ask ourselves, "Does my faith make me more loving?"

Next, Does your faith keep on growing?

The challenge here is to be honest. Have you grown in your faith recently? How many new spiritual insights did you experience in the last six months or year? How much Scripture did you read? How much time spent in prayer? Remember, the word disciple means "Learner." Are you still learning? Try every day to learn more, asking yourself at the end of each day - "What new concept or experience has given me learning today? And if you do not have anything, keep on asking each night. In so doing your conscious will be raised and then you will be able to recognize when the learnings happen during the day. The Ah-ha's will come to you and you will have learnings to remember in the evenings.

Fourth, Does your faith give you a sense of partnership with God?

Approach life today and everyday, saying over and over within yourself, "I am a child of God. God is with me. I am God's partner! I am working with God and for God, and God is working through me." If that is our approach, to partnership with God, your life will be changed dramatically. It will change the way you work, the way you speak, even your tone of voice. It will change the way you relate to others. Even your energy level will improve as well as your outlook and attitudes. Life will be better because that's the way God meant it to be. Dag Hammarskjold said it so well in

his daily prayer: (it is printed on the front of your bulletin today)

Give me a pure heart—that I may see Thee,

A humble heart—that I may hear Thee,

A heart of love—that I may serve Thee,

A heart of faith—that I may abide in Thee.

With that, let me ask, how did you do? How do you measure up? Does your faith make you more confident?

Does your faith make you more loving?

Does your faith keep on growing?

Does your faith give you a sense of partnership with God?

If you can answer yes to these questions, you are in pretty good shape spiritually. If not, then you need to spend some time with the Great Physician! As the Great Physician has your best interest in mind!

A spiritual checkup can tell you whether you're in good health spiritually or whether you need to change your diet - your spiritual intake. Or change your spiritual lifestyle by the practices you engage in as a Christian. Or perhaps listen a little more to your trainer - God's Holy Spirit working with you to keep you on your conditioning schedule.