

1. Pitch, Prayer, and a Pure Heart

That sounds like the title of a good Country song, or a great sermon. I was particularly challenged by this and got to thinking about getting our hands dirty. We tend to feel satisfied with a good day's work when we were able to dig in and get our hands dirty. But what about the times our hands get dirty when we are not intending to? Chris' example of pine pitch was just that. "All I was trying to do is serve others and now I have gunk on my hands." Where is my heart when I am trying to serve others? Am I doing it to give them the blessing, or do I want the praise for going "out of my way" to help?

Matthew 23:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

Pay it forward. What if no one was watching?

Discussion (5 minutes)

- Where is my heart when I serve others? Where is my heart when I serve my wife? Where is my heart when I serve my children and my family?
- Where is my heart when no one is looking?

2. Refiner's Fire

While there is only one verse in the Bible that speaks of the Refiner's Fire, there are several that mention refining of believers.

Malachi 3:2 (NIV)

² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV)

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Isaiah 48:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Ezekiel 22:17-22 (NIV)

¹⁷ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁸ "Son of man, the people of Israel have become dross to me; all of them are the copper, tin, iron and lead left inside a furnace. They are but the dross of silver. ¹⁹ Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into Jerusalem. ²⁰ As silver, copper, iron, lead and tin are gathered into a furnace to be melted with a fiery blast, so will I gather you in my anger and my wrath and put you inside the city and melt you. ²¹ I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her. ²² As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted inside her, and you will know that I the Lord have poured out my wrath on you.'"

March Discussion
Beatitude #6 Pure in Heart, and the Parables of the Mustard Seed, and Yeast
By: James Castruccio

Dross. I had to look it up 😊 (noun)

- Waste or impure matter.
- The scum that forms on the surface of molten metal as a result of oxidation.
- Worthless, commonplace, or trivial matter.
- The scum or refuse matter which is thrown off, or falls from, metals in smelting the ore, or in the process of melting.
- Rust of metals.
- Waste matter; any worthless matter separated from the better part; leavings; dregs; refuse.

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Refining is not punishment, but transformative.

Discussion (5 minutes)

- Where has the Lord refined me during my life?
- Did I realize I was being refined at the time or even looking back now?

Sometimes the fire is not as hot as a furnace, but we are being refined nonetheless.

I love the quote Chris shared from Charles Spurgeon. "The refiner sits by the fire. He does not leave the metal." - *Charles Spurgeon*

Let that sink in. He does not leave the metal.

3. Is Anyone Hungry?

Spring, while very early this year, is in full swing. The birds are active and singing loudly. I am excited to see hummingbirds show up to our feeders. Where do they go in the winter? Surely, they are too small to migrate south to warmer climates. (Yes, these are questions I sometimes ponder when I can't fall asleep)

This has been the mildest winter I have experienced here. I saw a robin this morning that looked like it was one worm away from not being able to get airborne. Yet I worry about my job, or my son across the globe. That robin didn't seem to have a care in the world. I need to constantly remind myself what Jesus said in the book of Matthew.

Matthew 6:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Discussion (5 minutes)

- How am I doing trusting the Lord? (like, *really trusting* Him)
- What do I need to surrender to Him?

4. Unity, Liberty, Charity

Michael challenged us with the lesson on the Parable of the Mustard Seed. How easy it is to read the same words and come away with a completely different interpretation. I appreciate the saying, **“In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity”**

Philip Schaff, the distinguished nineteenth-century church historian, calls the saying “the watchword of Christian peacemakers.” Often attributed to great theologians such as Augustine, it comes from an otherwise undistinguished German Lutheran theologian of the early seventeenth century, Rupertus Meldeniuss. The phrase occurs in a tract on Christian unity written (circa 1627) during the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), a bloody time in European history in which religious tensions played a significant role.

We could spend a weekend coming over these three verses and still have questions to ponder.

Discussion (15 minutes)

- What do I think the mustard seed/tree represent? What about the birds?
- What do I think the yeast represents?
- Do either of these parables encourage me to be more intentional in my walk with the Lord?

5. How did we Ponder Verses from Last Week?

5.1. Unity

Psalm 133 (NIV)

¹ How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! ² It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar of his robe. ³ It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Proverbs 6:16-19 (NIV)

¹⁶ There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies **and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.**

Matthew 12:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?

Satan loves to attack when we are separated from the pack. Lord, please help me to not make myself an easy target for Satan.

5.2. Liberty

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

5.3. Charity

Ephesians 4:1-7 (NIV)

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

I need to worry about *me* and *my* relationship with the Lord rather than someone else's.

Acts 17:10-12 (NIV)

¹⁰ As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹² As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

Know the Shepherd's voice.