July 26, 2015 p.m.

CHARACTER MATTERS

**THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS:** **Matt. 23:23-28**

* + - * + What are the weightier matters?

*“Justice, mercy, faith* and *the love of God”* **(Luke 11:42)**

* Judgment – righteous and just, impartial, integrity; forgiving and compassionate; trustingly faithful to God; loving.

Charactermattersare *weightier matters* to the Lord.

Consider these character passages:(ways we can measure ourselves)

* + *Blessed* attitudes of **Matt. 5**;*put off the old man* and *put on the new man* in **Col. 3**;*the**fruit of the Spirit* in **Gal. 5**;*love* of **I Cor. 13**.

**ARE WE JUST KEEPING THE CEMETERIES LOOKING PRETTY?**

* Grass is mowed, headstones are clean and upright, flowers are arranged.
* Reputation is what people think we are, character is what we really are. (hopefully match)
  + - * + We can eat the Lord’s Supper every Sunday, have faith to do great works, understand all the mysteries of the gospel, feed the poor, even die a martyr’s death and still be “*nothing!”* **(1 Cor. 13:1-3)**
* Are we selfish, have to have our own way, boastful, rude, easily angered, keep score of wrongs done to us, suspicious of the behavior of others, think the worst, etc.?

**CHANGING CHARACTER IS HARD BUT CHANGE WE CAN AND MUST DO!**

* We must start right away before we get too hard to wash clean. (dishes)
* We are to take care of the inside first and then the outward things will take care of themselves, plus they will be done from the heart.
* Character is a matter of choice, not circumstances or environment.
* We should spend more time thinking about our character and not our nature.
* What do we do with the package of tendencies that has been given to us?
* Our feelings, moods fluctuate – growth in character takes place in spite of this.
* Godly character is formed in the diligent at heart. (single-mindedness, determination)
* The standard is Christ, not other people. (later leaves us feeling good about ourselves)

**THE GOAL IS BEING CONFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF JESUS.**

* Character in Romans and Hebrews (**Romans 8:29 – Hebrews 1:3; Romans 5:3-4**)
* Tribulations to hope – the problem of pain.
* IF WE MAKE RIGHT CHOICES IN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD PAIN, IT CAN HAVE A “REFINING” EFFECT ON US. We can be better people, with purer hearts, as a result of having experienced difficulty and overcome it. Indeed, pain can leave us with character qualities so beautiful they are fit to be taken into eternity with us.

(Everything Burns Away but the Beauty, April 10, Gary Henry, RF)

* We have to be willing to suffer the pain of change.
* It is sometimes a slow, painful process.
* Pain is part of the joy of hope.
* “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved” (Helen Keller). (RF, G. Henry, No Other Entrance, Feb. 16)
* Give thanks for the progress, not necessarily the pain.
* The joy of progress towards God.
* A joy that is ultimately and mostly fulfilled in heaven.
* I don’t spend much time thinking about how often I ought to eat the Lord’s Supper or whether or not I ought to use instrumental music or whether or not the church should support entertainment and recreational endeavors (unless I’m studying with someone about such things), but I can spend every day thinking about these character matters.
* This is where we show the most growth over time. (we are all works in progress)

(Some of this lesson {weightier matters) comes from Nov. 20, 2011, Gnats and Camels)