

## Have You Seen Yourself Today?

Psalm 139:23-24

July 19, 2020

The title of the sermon is “Have you seen yourself today?” The obvious answer is “Of course, we have.” I am sure you have seen yourself in the mirror this morning but the person you have seen in the mirror, was that you or was that your outer image? Is your outer image really you? What makes you truly you?

We are often told to “know ourselves.” Different philosophers and religious leaders have given this advice. “Know Yourself” is the inscription that we find on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi as a source of wisdom. Knowing yourself is the beginning of wisdom. The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu is quoted as saying, “He who knows others is wise. He who knows himself is enlightened.”

But what does it mean to know yourself? I am sure it is a multifaceted question. Knowing oneself could mean many different things. It could mean knowing what we believe and why we believe what we believe. It could mean knowing how we think. It could mean knowing what we really want and why we want what we want. It could mean knowing our strengths and limitations. It could mean understanding our emotions and desires. It could mean knowing what we like or dislike and the reasons for it. I am sure there are many different things we can consider when we think about who we are and what we are.

But the most important thing in understanding who we are is to understand our mind and heart. Someone wrote a poem about the importance of our mind and heart.

Watch your Thoughts, they become Words!  
Watch your Words, they become Actions!  
Watch your Actions, they become Habits!  
Watch your Habits, they become Character!  
Watch your Character...It becomes your Destiny!  
And whenever you give your word, say the truth.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that all actions and behaviors begin with our thoughts, hearts and minds. Our thoughts, hearts and minds are the core of who we are. King Solomon said in Proverbs 23:7, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” Understanding our heart is the way to understand ourselves but can we truly understand our heart?

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<sup>1</sup> The poem is attributed to Solotan Olatunbosun, <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/watch-your-thoughts/#content>

Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and beyond cure; who can know it?” Our heart is so wicked that we cannot even understand it ourselves. The following verse 10 says, “I, the Lord, search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.” God examines our hearts, minds, and thoughts.

In order for us to understand ourselves we need to allow God to show us our true self. This is why David in our text this morning asks God to examine his heart. He says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Can anyone correctly examine our hearts and thoughts, motivations and intentions? Only God can do that. He knows our hearts and our thoughts. He clearly sees our motivations and intentions. We cannot hide anything from the Lord.

It is our heart that determines whether or not we are right with God, and even truly right with ourselves. There is a Christian college out in the Midwest where there was a huge oak tree in the middle of the campus. It was a beautiful tree and gave a nice shade. Students loved to gather under this tree to talk and to mingle. No doubt that it was one of the most popular places on the campus.

Then one day, a very strong wind arose and a loud crack echoed across the campus. This huge oak tree, this monument of memories cracked and fell to the ground. When they examined it, they noticed that disease had been growing within the tree to the point that the inner part of the tree was practically hollow. So, when the strong wind blew and shifted the weight of the tree to one side, it could not sustain its own weight and collapsed.

This is the reason why so many powerful and influential people fall, whether they are a politicians, or a religious leader, or business mogul. On the outside they hear people’ cheer but on the inside, they know that they are not who people think they are.

King David was a man of integrity. He was not a man without fault. He was just like any other man, with sinful desires and all but he was a man who was open to honest examination of his heart. He was so honest before the Lord that the Lord himself called David “the man after God’s own heart.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:22.

How did David become a man of such integrity? He constantly examined himself. In our text, verse 24, David said, “See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” “Examine me to see if there is any wickedness in my thoughts and behaviors, and reveal it to me so that I may change and live the life eternal.” This is what he was saying.

We live in a society that dilutes evil in the name of politeness, sensitivity and political correctness. We don’t talk about wickedness; we talk about weakness. We don’t call an adulterous relationship sinful; we call it inappropriate or an “extra marital relationship.” We don’t call sins transgressions; we call them problems or issues.

People in our generation are moving further away from the Lord. When you do away with God, you no longer recognize sin as sin. When you don’t recognize sin as sin, you no longer have guilt. When you ignore guilt, you do away with responsibility. And when you do away with responsibility, you do away with punishment. The result is moral and ethical chaos.

We all need to examine ourselves often. Do you know why David wanted God to examine his heart, mind and thought? It is not for God to discover the result. God already knew what was in his heart, mind and thought. It was for David to discover what God sees in his heart, mind and thought. His purpose is to change so that he would be the person God wanted him to be.

It was before the era of cell phones. In a small town, a young boy came to a drug store to use the pay phone. The owner of the drug store overheard the boy talking on the phone. The boy said, “Hello, sir, I was calling to see if you needed a lawn boy. Oh, you have one. Are you satisfied with his work? Oh, you are! Sir, I will check back with you just in case he doesn’t do a good job. Thank you for your time.” And he hung up the phone.

The store owner felt little sorry for the boy. So he said, “Sorry you didn’t get the job, son.”

“Oh, no sir,” said the boy. “I’ve got the job. I was just calling to make sure I am doing a good job.”<sup>3</sup>

Isn’t that wonderful? I am sure the boy grew up to be a man of integrity.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael P. Green, an illustration under the subject of self-examination, [www.esermons.com](http://www.esermons.com).

There is a proverb in the business world that says “The man who takes no inventories finally becomes bankrupt.”

I hope we all examine ourselves often enough.