

GUARD YOUR HEART

Solomon writes in Proverbs 4:23 'Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life'.

I'd like to read a short story from Joanna Weaver's book "Allowing God to change us from the inside out".

The quaint little village lay nestled high in the Austrian Alps. Surrounded by emerald forests and alpine peaks, it had become a favourite of tourists wanting to escape city life. Located in the centre of town was a glistening pond fed by a stream that wound down from the mountains high above. Each summer, beautiful white swans floated across its sparkling depths as townsfolk and visitors sat on its grassy banks. The whole place was a paradise, some said. Absolute paradise. But one evening, as the town council met to review its budget, one member pointed to an expense no one had noticed before.

"Keeper of the Spring", the line read.

"What's that?", he asked.

"Just an old man who lives up the mountain, " another answered. "Not quite sure what he does. Something to do with the spring and the city's water supply."

Perhaps this was an area where they could save money, they reasoned. And so they sent word that the old man's services would no longer be needed.

At first, nothing seemed to change. The pond was not quite as clear as it had been but no one really noticed. But by the following spring when the swans didn't return, several commented. Others wandered about the yellowish brown tint of water and the odor that wafter up when the weather was just right. Tourist reservations lagged and the town contemplated a national ad campaign. But no one thought anything about the old man on the mountain – until the day a curious few hiked up to the source of the spring.

Along the way they noticed rocks and debris blocking the waters flow but the real problem lay at the spring itself. Its once bubbling depths were now still and dark, clogged with rotting leaves and forest litter – the very things the old man had spent his summers working so faithfully to remove. And that's when everyone realized. No one was more important to the town than the Keeper of the Spring.

Tonight I would like to look at how we can guard our hearts? What are the rocks and debris that can pollute and block the wellspring of our heart? And what can we do to stop our hearts from being polluted by these things?

There are many things that can have this affect on our hearts but the typical things are well summed up in Mark 4 verses 18-19 in the parable of the sower.

1. The cares of this world.
2. The deceitfulness of riches.
3. The lusts of other things entering in.

The cares of this world are not necessarily sinful, but they can take the focus of our heart away from God and they can choke our relationship with him if we are not careful.

The lust for riches or materialism or lust for other things such as sensual pleasure can spring out from our hearts and take over our lives if we don't guard our thoughts and our motives which need to be aligned with God's way of give rather than the world's way of get.

As our lord Jesus said in Mark 7 verse 21. "For from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person".

When I was younger, I trained to box and I learnt very quickly that if your guard was down, you'd get hurt and you didn't always see it coming.

What can we do to guard our hearts from these wrong attitudes and motives that can pollute our hearts or not allow our lives to get so busy that God is crowded out of our lives?

In Evan's First Parade speech he spoke of the importance of regular maintenance checks. The same principle can apply with our spiritual lives. We need to actively make time for God in our lives and like King David, renowned as a man after God's own heart, regularly meditate on the word of God to establish a strong guard over our hearts. At times we will need to say no to things that crowd God out of lives or to motives and attitudes that reflect the world's way of get.

Just like King David and the old man "Keeper of the Spring" we need to guard against the debris of this world by cleansing and strengthening our wellspring with the good and upright Word of God.

'Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life'.