

Sunday August 16th, 2020

Call and Response

Luke 6:43-49.

Jesus concludes his 'sermon on the mount' (or 'on the plains' as it is the gospel of Luke), with the question, 'Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I say?'

It's a piercing question. Why is it that our actions don't line up with our beliefs? We believe that is good to exercise, but we watch TV instead. We believe it is good to save our money, but we spend. We believe it is good and right to love our enemies, give to those in need and to look to ourselves rather than judge others, and yet we hate, horde and condemn. Even when we know that this will only lead to strife and pain – in this age and in the age to come. Why do we do these things?

In our passage today, Jesus gives the answer: it's the heart. Our actions don't flow from what we believe but instead, they flow from our hearts – our desires, where we place our trust and our deep-seated habits. If you want to do good things, you need a health heart, and if you have an unhealthy heart, you won't do better things no matter how hard you try. If we want our actions to line up with our beliefs, we need to look to have our hearts transformed. Thankfully, that's exactly what God is in the business of doing. He encounters us with such joy and beauty that our innermost desires start to rearrange. He calls us to confess and repentance to free us from the power that our bad habits and intentions have over us. And he calls us to act out our faith with good deeds to solidify the changes he makes in our hearts.

It's easy to be content with our actions not lining up with our beliefs. Let's not fall into that trap. Let's strive for good deeds – not by our own effort or self-shame or guilt – but by the transformation of our hearts.

Questions for group discussion

1. What stood out to you in the message?
2. How can you respond?