

Short Talk

(SHT217a)

God looks at the inside

© Jane Hulme 2023

ALL AGE WORSHIP
RESOURCES.ORG



SHORT TALK: “God looks at the inside”

- Aim of Short talk:** To challenge people with Jesus’ truth that it is what is in our hearts that defiles us.
- Use of Short talk:** This is a short All Age talk picking out one issue from the Lectionary Gospel reading of the Sunday main service. The talk stands alone and assumes that the Gospel Bible reading may not yet have been read to the congregation. It could be used for example, for the whole congregation before the children go out to their age specific groups, leaving the adults with a full sermon later.
- Main themes:** Heart, Sin, Hypocrisy
- Biblical references:** Matthew 15:10-28
- Lectionary:** Year A 2023 – The 11th Sunday after Trinity
- Props:** You will need:
- 1) a small box or container that you fill with some “dirt” for example mud, contents of your vacuum cleaner etc. Wrap the box up in some shiny wrapping paper, then make a couple of dirty marks on it with mud or something that can be washed off.
 - 2) a dampened cloth
- Before the service:** Brief someone to stand up at the appropriate point and shout: “*What’s inside the box?*” and then to answer “*yes.*”

.....

Look at this gift-wrapped box..... *(Hold up box)*

- Isn’t the paper absolutely beautiful.....*(Examine the box)*
- Look at how the paper catches the light....
- It must be the nicest wrapping paper I have seen.

We need to keep this wrapping paper in perfect condition....

- butoh no....what can I see?
- There are a couple of dirty marks on this beautiful paper.
- What am I going to do?
- I need to clean them off.....where’s my cloth?

(Pick up dampened cloth and clean off the dirty marks from the paper)

That’s better.....we can’t have the paper getting dirty now can we?

- I need to make sure that no more dirty marks spoil it.

We need to put this gift-wrapped box somewhere safe. *(At this point your volunteer stands up and shouts: "What's inside the box?")*

What's inside the box?

- Does that matter?
- We have beautiful, clean, sparkly wrapping paper here.
- Does it matter what's inside? *(Volunteer shouts: "yes.")*

All right let's have a look and see what is inside. *(Carefully remove the paper to expose the box, then take the lid off the box)*

- Oh dear.....that's not very nice.....a load of filthy mud (or whatever you have put inside) is inside it.....*(lift up some of the dirt for the congregation to see)*
- On the outside the box looked beautiful, but on the inside, it looks very different.

If I were to ask you what is more important; the wrapping paper or the contents inside the box, I wonder what you would say?

- I think that you'd all agree with N (name of volunteer) that the contents inside the box are what matters.
- Not many of us would be happy on our birthdays or Christmas to simply admire the wrapping paper around our gifts, would we?

When Jesus talked with the religious leaders in His day, some of them seemed to forget that what matters to God is not the things that they did to make themselves look good or clean on the outside....

- what matters to God is what we are like on the inside.....
- whether our hearts are set upon loving Him or not,
- whether our hearts are set upon obeying His way of living or not.

Jesus told the religious leaders that what makes our lives dirty is not a bit of mud or dirt on the outside of our bodies.

- What makes us dirty is what comes out of our hearts.
- Jesus said: *"For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander."* (Matthew 15:19 NLT)
- Our hearts can be full of dirt, a bit like our box that was full of dirt.

We may dress up beautifully on the outside and do things that make us look good to other people, but inside it may be a completely different story –

- we may be full of bitterness, hatred, anger, selfishness, laziness and so on

God sees through the wrapping paper that we try and cover our lives with.

- He sees right into our hearts, and because He loves us, He has made a way, through Jesus, for us to be clean on the inside as well as on the outside.

So, this day, remember that God is far more interested in what is going on in your heart than in how you look on the outside.