

Matthew 23:1-36

A Check-up with the Great Physician

1. In today's lesson, Jesus offers nine criticisms of the Pharisees
 - a. Though they come across as angry judgments, they are spoken out of love and a desire to see the Pharisees draw closer to God, which they say is what they want
 - b. The early church included many Pharisees, proving that many Pharisees listened to him, 'tested themselves' by these criticisms, and grew in faith as a result.
 - c. If we dare, we too can submit to these judgments to see how spiritually healthy we are
2. These criticisms can serve as 'diagnostic tests' to help us evaluate the health of our faith, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 13:5 – "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. What have you to fear? Don't you know Jesus Christ is in you?"
3. What are the nine 'diagnostic tests' Jesus gives to the Pharisees – and us?
 - a. Weight: 23:1-12 – I know what is right but how well do I live it? Am I flabby when it comes to living for God? How would I fare if judged by the same judgments I use against others?
 - b. Temperature: 23:13 – Am I 'cold' toward those who praise God? Do I get "hot" when others praise Jesus by name?
 - c. (Eyes: 23:14 – As I serve others, do I see them as people God loves or do I only see what I can get from them?)
 - d. "Say 'Ahhh'": 23:15 – Do I know the Gospel, or do I confuse the Gospel with religious rules?
 - e. Blood Pressure: 23:16-22 - ??Altar or gold?
 - f. Stethoscope: 23:23-24 – Do I do my 'religious duty' but have no compassion for others?
 - g. Cholesterol check: 23:25-26 – Do I make as much effort to clean my heart as I do to clean my appearance for Church?
 - h. X-Rays: 23:27-28 - Am I on the inside what I want others to think I am on the outside?
 - i. Ears – Do I recognize Jesus in the words he speaks to me through Scripture?
4. Each test is another way of asking,
 - a. Do I love the Lord my Savior with all my heart?
 - b. Do I really want to know him more deeply, or am I afraid to get that close to him?
 - c. When he corrects me, do I hear his love and concern for my well-being?
5. The more I grow to love him, the more the rest of life will fall into place
6. Am I ready to hear about Jesus' soon return, and does that thought stir longing in me or fear?