**6-23-19**

**Sermon Highlights:**  On Sunday Keith began a new series on Proverbs, a  “wisdom” book that gives God’s advice for how to have (among other things), peace over anxiety, security over fear or the need for control, and loving versus using others.  The focus of Sunday’s lesson was how the heart is the center of our moral and spiritual life, and that guarding our hearts is the key to everything.  Proverbs 4:23 reads, *“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”*

**We can know the condition of our hearts by our behavior.** Jesus taught on this in Mark 7:21 - *“For from within, out of a person’s****heart,****come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride and foolishness*.”  We have all these other problems because we have heart problems, and we have heart problems because we haven’t guarded it well.

**So how do we guard our hearts?**Keith suggested that first we need to recognize the heart as THE priority.And, then we need to be vigilant about guarding it. This means making choices daily about who/what we let influence our hearts. **We are responsible for what we let influence us**.  For some, God may be speaking to you about what you are watching online or on TV that has normalized sin and damaged your heart.  The culture around us elevates and justifies “personal” needs so much we can’t see how we are hurting ourselves, other people, or God’s reputation.  It normalizes taking advantage of other people to get what we want, having sex outside of marriage, and distancing from people who don’t agree with us, etc.

**Personal Reflection**: It may also be a person or group that you’ve let have too much influence. It sounds simple, but for years I didn’t see this connection to guarding my heart.  I had a close group of friends (Christians, even) that I let influence me in terrible ways. I thought I was being a “light” in the group, but instead I just joined the darkness.  In order to guard my heart better, I made some hard choices that dramatically changed my life – like peace instead of anxiety, and better control of my tongue.  I still marvel that I can live without anxiety.

 **Prayer/Application:**

1. Ask God in what ways you could guard your heart better, or are letting the world influence how you live.   Then ask Him for the wisdom and grace to “retune” your heart according to His word and who He says you are.
2. How vigilant are you at guarding your heart – even over good priorities like work or family?  Ask God to reveal if there is anything you’re using as an excuse for not guarding your heart