

I want to give credit for the ideas I will be developing this morning. The essence of these thoughts came from Scot McKnight, a professor and author from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Illinois.

How many of you don't like going to the dentist? I'm going to give you two choices of what kind of dentist you could go to.

The first type would, after discovering you had cavities, get upset with you and tell you off for not doing a better job caring for your teeth. How many of you want to go to this dentist?

The second type would, after discovering you had cavities, tell you that there's nothing to worry about and everything will be fine. How many of you want to go to this dentist?

I think we all want a third kind of dentist. We want someone who will caution us, maybe even mildly rebuke us, if they see we haven't been taking care of our teeth as we should. We don't want an angry, "I can't believe you did that" dentist, but one who will guide and instruct as well, maybe saying "You need to brush or floss more often. That will help maintain your teeth's health."

We want a dentist who will say, "Here's the problem. You have an infection in your tooth, and we need to take it out so your tooth won't have further difficulties. As a matter of fact, if we leave it in, it will cause additional problems to your whole body, not just your mouth." And this dentist would explain what his plan is for taking care of the problem. How many of you would like going to this dentist?

Jesus is the third dentist. He has told us how to take care of our spiritual lives (teeth). He taught the disciples and us how to pray (Matt. 6:9-13). He reminded us in the Sermon on the mount the qualities needed to live the spiritual life he asks: being poor in spirit, mourning for sin, meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, being peacemakers.

In that same section, he also reminds us that actions alone aren't enough. Our attitudes and the thoughts of our hearts are even more important.

Matt. 5:21-22: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to the judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment."

And he carries out the same message about adultery, and taking oaths, and revenge, and loving your neighbor vs. hating your enemies.

It's at this point that Jesus is saying, "I found an infection in your soul, and we need to take it out. I know what to do if you will let me."

But he doesn't just remove the infection and fill in the cavity, like an earthly dentist would. He removes the old rotten tooth and puts a perfect new one in its place. 2 Cor. 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come."

His death on the cross has given us a new life. We get to get rid of the old one, filled with the rottenness of sin for a new soul that, through baptism and repentance, is cleansed and white in His sight.

Our partaking of the elements during the time is our reminder that we have sin (infection) in our souls, and that Jesus died to remove those sins from our record so we could be reconciled to Him who loves us more than His own life. We are blessed beyond understanding to have this opportunity again this week.

PRAYER: Father God, we come before you at this time to acknowledge those parts we see in ourselves that we know are rotten, that are not what you intended for them to be. Thank you for Jesus' death on the cross, that allows us to have those sins removed, at His expense, so that we can be in fellowship with God in righteousness once again. In Jesus' name, Amen.