9 – 1 – 2019 – Message – Our Thoughts

Most of our brains are constantly working.

Even while we are sleeping, our minds are still engaged – thinking, processing, planning, and trying to resolve problems.

Our mental computers never shut down.

Scientists say that about 10,000 thoughts go through the human mind each day (I would have guessed that the number was higher).

Because our brains are doing so much thinking, it is important to evaluate just what we are thinking.

What kinds of thoughts are running through our minds? What kinds of thoughts are putting down roots?

What kinds of things are our minds really focused on? Why is it so important that we evaluate our thoughts?

In our Scripture this morning Paul spelled out in detail the kinds of things we ought to be thinking about.

Philippians 4: 8  *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy— meditate on these things.*

**Because we are what we think.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson 19th century theologian, professor, and poet wrote  “Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

Where did the destiny begin? With a thought – in our minds.

We are all a product of our thoughts. The spiritual battle begins and is ultimately won or lost in our minds.

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise.

That is a pretty extensive list, don’t you think?

The list becomes a good test that we can apply to our thoughts. When we begin to think about something we can stop and check that thought against this list.

We can ask: Is this thought true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy? If our thought doesn’t pass the test, then it needs to be eliminated immediately.

That sounds like a pretty simple thing to do, but I need to make this perfectly clear we cannot fight this battle without the mighty power of God's Holy Spirit living in us.

The battle for our thoughts and minds is ongoing from generation to generation as Paul wrote to the Romans in Chapter 12 verse 2: *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Now let’s ask the question: What kinds of thoughts are always true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy?

**God’s thoughts – God’s Word.**

The very best thing we can fill our minds with is God’s words – God’s truths, principles and promises.

What are some things we can do in the battle for our minds?

**1. Only Let the Good Thoughts In**

Look with me at Psalm 19:7-11.

7 The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

8 The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living.

*9 Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is fair.*

*10 They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.*

*11 They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who obey them.*

God’s Word is perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, righteous, and precious! It is so valuable – it is priceless! There is nothing more beneficial.

And the only way to get God’s Word into our minds and hearts is to put forth effort to listen to the word, read the word, study the word, and meditate (think about, focus on) God’s Word.

Paul wrote in 1 Peter 1: 13 – 15 *13 So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.*

*14 So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. 15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy.*

We learn from Psalm 19 that knowing God’s Word is not just a good idea, it is a matter of survival, and without it there is no spiritual growth and ongoing reward.

But when we treasure God’s Word and live according to it, then there is great reward.

To win the battle of the mind, we must put only good things in our minds, and God’s Word is the very best thing we can put in our minds and keep in our thoughts.

That sounds like a pretty simple thing to do, but I need to make this perfectly clear again, we cannot fight this battle on our own we need the mighty power of God's Holy Spirit living in us.

**2. Don’t Let Bad Thoughts Take Root**

 We all know it's difficult if not impossible for us to keep all bad thoughts from ever entering our minds, but we don’t have to allow them to move in and make it home.

The old saying is true: “You can’t keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can keep it from nesting in your hair.”

When bad thoughts enter your mind thoughts that are opposite of what we have just looked at, we need to kick them out like birds, we need to shoo them away.

It really is that simple we need to stop the bad thoughts in their tracks.

How can we overcome those bad thoughts and bring them to an end?

A primary way to do it is by fighting them with the truth of Scripture, just as Jesus did in Matthew 4: 1 – 11.

Jesus answered every temptation Satan threw at Him with "It is written", or "The Scripture says", depending on the version you read. He is our example, our teacher, we need to follow His lead.

In Ephesians 6: 16 – 17 Paul instructs us in the last parts of the Armor of God *16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Paul also wrote in 2 Corinthians 10: 5 *We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.*

If your bad thought is something impure, then you can learn a Scripture that commands purity and use that verse to dispel the temptation.

If your bad thought is something untrue that is causing you to fear, then learn a truthful promise of God that can be thought about to push the bad thought away.

If your bad thought has to do with hatred or revenge, then focus on God’s commands to love your enemy, or focus on Scripture that reminds you of how much God has forgiven you.

If this seems too simplistic, then keep in mind that this is the method the Psalmist proposed in Psalm 119: 9 – 11.

*9 How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your word. 10 I have tried hard to find you don’t let me wander from Your commands. 11 I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*

**3. Be Aware of What You Are Letting In**

 I realize it is impossible for us to never see, hear, or think about something evil or impure, but it is important that we do our best to keep the evil or impure thoughts out of our minds.

When we are trying to eat in a healthier way, we watch what we eat and try not to take into our body things that are unhealthy – like processed foods or things that are high in salt or sugar.

In the same way, if we are trying to have a healthier mind, then we need to try not to take into our mind things that are unhealthy.

That means we have to be careful about the things we are reading, watching, listening to, or surfing on the internet.

  As you know very well, much of the media – TV, movies, music, books, magazines, social media, and websites promote what is false, ignoble, impure, unlovely, and detestable.

That is not to say that everything about TV, movies, music, books, magazines, social media and websites is evil, but if we are honest, we would have to admit that a lot of it is.

We need to be careful about what we allow to enter our minds, which by the way has a way of sticking and resurfacing when we least expect it. Because whatever is in our minds has an influence on us.

Remember Ephesians 6: 10 – 17 and put on the armor of God for protection.

Anyone who says that they can fill their minds with that which is evil without being affected by it is fooling himself or herself.

That person may not be able to recognize the effect immediately or overtly, but they are being affected, nonetheless.

In Proverbs 6: 27 – 28 Solomon asked; *27 Can a man scoop a flame into his lap and not have his clothes catch on fire? 28 Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet?*

No, he cannot, you can't play with fire and not expect to get burned.

 The apostle Paul understood the power of the mind and he understood the importance of filling our minds and focusing our minds on only good things.

Paul was a man with a one-track mind, focused on proclaiming the Gospel, the Good News of Christ Jesus, no matter the consequences.

We all know people with one-track minds focused on sports, cars, chocolate, or whatever.

I want to encourage you to have one-track minds, not focused on those things of the world, but one-track minds focused on the things of God.

One-track minds focused on Jesus, thinking like Jesus and acting like Jesus.

 One-track minds that do all we can to fill our minds with what is true and noble, right and pure, lovely and admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

How blessed our lives will be if we have minds focused on those kinds of things. And, more importantly, what a blessing we would be to others if our minds are focused on those kinds of things.

Isaiah wrote of God in 26: 3 *You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in You, all whose thoughts are fixed on You!*

Surely the God of peace will be with us and do amazing things in us, with us, and through us, when we have our one-track minds focused on the righteous things of God!

Philippians 4: 8  *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy— meditate on these things.*

Then the God of peace will be with you.