

A Heart that Belongs to Jesus St Mark's 28.6.20

Audio: <https://www.daleappleby.net/index.php/mp3-sermons/51-recent-sermons/1041-the-heart-that-belongs-to-jesus>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txWm4o40Www>

Isa 59:15b-21

Preface

In terms of a marriage (cf. 2 Cor 11: 2), the Lord has our hand, but he doesn't have all of our hearts. Today he wants your heart. (JY prays)

Introduction

With the death this year of several long-term Christian friends, plus clear scriptural confirmation (2 Pet 1:13-15), I have been coming to terms with the reality that I am in the last phase of my life and ministry and need to leave a spiritual deposit for coming generations (1Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14). How might this apply to our community here at St Mark's? On our present trajectory where will we be in 10 years' time? If we do a reckoning based on our size, age profile, education level or breadth of spiritual experience, things look rather depressing. By 2030 many of our older members will have died. And without an unprecedented move of God our younger families will have transferred to other churches for the sake of their teenagers. Given our current inability to fund a full-time minister, we will probably be a part of a multi-centred parish which will include Lockridge and perhaps Guildford. This is a natural way of looking at things; *but God* chooses "what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:26ff.) and delights in "turning weakness into strength" (Heb 11:34). What then is the lord asking of us?

Ps 16; Galatians 6:6-10

Sowing and Reaping

One of the great truths of scripture concerns sowing and reaping, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." (Gal 6:7-9). This is not about some "principle", but a certain truth based on Jesus' life journey through death to resurrection, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:23-24). Jesus's sowing of his own life on the cross has reaped the fruit of eternal life for countless millions.

Inside Jesus

When Christ prophesied that his death would lead to the salvation of countless people, he was expounding a spiritual truth from within the depths of his being. At the very centre of Jesus' will for the salvation of the world was his longing for the coming of the Spirit of God. In agony in Gethsemane (Matt 26:37-38) he accepted the cup of suffering (Matt 26:39) knowing that only through his dying on the cross and entering into resurrection-glory could the Spirit come in the fulness of his power (John 7:39; 16:6). Christ's Spirit-filled prayer in the Garden "Abba! Father! Not what I will but what you will..." (Mark 14:36) is a prayer to the Father in complete heart surrender (Matt 12:34). This *surrender was a*

wellspring/fountainhead (cf. John 4:14) for the saving power of the cross the glory of the resurrection and the coming outpouring of the Spirit. Christ's heart surrender, the handing over of his innermost being in obedience to the Father is the basis for the whole new creation. In Christ, our heart surrender is the key to kingdom fruitfulness. In exhorting you to follow Jesus, I urge you to give him what you share most profoundly with his humanity, your heart. I appeal to you to sow your heart in the cause of the kingdom of God.

Luke 8:4-15

Heart

Jesus' parable of the sower unveils the secret of how the kingdom of God grows (Luke 8:10); kingdom multiplication happens at the level of the heart. Jesus taught the crowds, "And some (seed) fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." Then he interpreted his teaching to his disciples, "As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an *honest and good heart*, and bear fruit with patience." (Luke 8:8, 15). Christ's disciples would have understood that the prediction of a hundredfold increase from a single grain meant miraculous multiplication. The challenge for us is, "Do I have a heart desire to be a hundredfold disciple?"

Living in the Spirit

Each of us can experience a hundredfold increase, if we walk the way of Jesus, yielding our hearts obediently to God's will so the Spirit can be poured forth in unprecedented power. To the degree you give your heart to Jesus to that extent he will fill you with his powerful Spirit. There is a wonderful exchange, you give your heart to Jesus and he gives you his Spirit (Acts 15:8-9). Who in their right mind could refuse such an exchange?? If Jesus lives in you then the Holy Spirit also indwells you (Rom 8:9); sometimes however we are insensitive to the *longing of the Spirit to dwell in each of us more intensely* (James 4:5 cf. Eph 3:17). He yearns to fill us with himself so that he might multiply the fruit of Christ in and through us so we might grow into hundredfold disciples.

Over the years of listening to Dale preach here I have observed him use one scripture repeatedly. "grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:24, 29-31). This prayer was answered because the whole Church prayed it together as one with a loud voice (4:23-24; 5:12 cf. Rom 15:6). I can see that this scripture is on Dale's heart because it is on the Lord's heart. Can you see that if the Lord moves our hearts to pray this prayer *together in unity*, we will become a Spirit - led Body which will experience miraculous growth and multiplication. What is holding us back?

What Seed

The dynamic of the Word of God runs through all I have been teaching. Jesus is the seed of the Word whose dying brings salvation to multitudes, the seed which falls in the various kinds of soil is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The word is the same in each case, but its

fruitfulness is entirely dependent on how the Word is received in the heart. The word touches the heart of even the barren soil, “The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word *from their hearts*, so that they may not believe and be saved.” (8:12). Only of the hundredfold group is it said, they “*hold it fast* in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience”. This is where we have a crisis.

In a prayer meeting before a service where I was a guest preacher some years ago, an older man prophesied that the Lord was about to feed his people with the “finest of wheat” (Deut 32:14; Pss 81:16; 147:14). This mightily encouraged and empowered me. Is this the longing and prayer of your heart? i.e. to be richly fed with the Word! And when you hear the Word are you holding it fast as *God* speaks to you (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3; Heb 5:12)?

To “hold fast” in our hearts what you are being taught might mean something like what is described in this petition from the Book of Common Prayer, “Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may *embrace and ever hold fast* the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.” It might mean something like the way I responded to the Bible and the preaching I heard after I first became a Christian. Every Sunday I used to take a paper and pen along with my Bible to church and take notes. In those days I made a hand-written summary of the whole Bible, copied down many verses on file cards to aid memorisation and even recorded myself on tape to play back when I was driving the car. The Word set a fire in my heart which has never gone out. What about our shared future?

Conclusion

As I was out praying last week, the Lord put into my mind something new. Those who long for an honest and good heart will be filled with the Spirit and bear much fruit *because* they will become *more like Jesus* whose heart was a 100% good and honest and whose fruitfulness is everlasting. In the light of this who wouldn’t want to be a hundredfold disciple?

The Lord is speaking of raising up a new thread of leaders at St Marks. A group *across the generations* who will stand out in giving to Jesus whatever they have left to give in the time the Lord has given them: give of energy, intelligence and resources. To put the same thing another way, the Lord is calling forth a group of men/women of various ages who will lead in the Church through sacrifice. You will not wait for clergy to set the pace but be spiritual leaders who will respond to what the Lord is calling you to say and do. This is not a call for volunteers, but a response in obedience to the call of the Lord which will permanently change your life.

When you give your whole heart to Jesus let me describe your life in some words from 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 “endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities...purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love...truthful speech, and the power of God ... honour and dishonour...slander and praise...treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live...10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” This strange and extraordinary combination of humiliation and exaltation (cf. Phil 3:10; Rev 5:6

etc.) is nothing less than sharing in the earthly and the heavenly life of Jesus. Who hear wants to give their whole heart to Jesus?