



Series:	Reference:	Title:	Date:
Ruin to Renovation	Psalm 139	Heart Surgery	01.28.18
Website Writeup:			
Who can know another's heart? Who can even know their own? There is only one who can, and has the power to change our heart of hearts to bring life and peace!			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

(1st slide up during basic intro) We talked last week about the need to focus on the bullseye - the heart of a person in our call to evangelism in obedience to Mt 28:18-20; The Great Commission - His last command, our first concern.

We said we shouldn't get caught up dancing around outer circles of behavior & artifact. Rather, be concerned about our heart & the heart of others as they relate to Jesus. Which isn't to say behavior & artifacts are unimportant - they are & should change, but truly change, resultant of a divine work in our hearts, not just behavioral restraint - which is merely moralism or legalism.

The only way our hearts truly change is through the transformative power of Christ. We said God's chosen to work through us in bringing Christ to others. We're the salt of the earth, bearing the thoughts & heart of God to all people groups.

Yet, we can't give away what we don't have, and when we give up our efforts towards spiritual formation, spiritual entropy kicks in & bad things happen. Christ as mere fire insurance does not make us relevant to the world. And something will fill the vacuum left within us when we don't pursue him - most likely things contrary to God's thoughts. Even the good & noble things like justice & love become idolatrous without a focus on Jesus. For instance, justice without forgiveness is revenge. Forgiveness without justice is appeasement. And love without the Lordship of Christ is misleading & damaging. There are things we, in our humanistic wisdom, think are loving but in reality are damaging to the soul of a person. The water of Christ must flow inwardly in order to overflow outwardly to others.

So we seek & preach the kingdom reign of God in obedience to Christ with the end goal of worship in mind. We remember Acts 1:8, *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* Which reiterates the Great Commission & tells us we have what it takes to do as Jesus commissions.

But...we must remember, when Acts 1:8 isn't obeyed by the church, we experience Acts 8:1, *On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.* If we're unwilling to go to those people groups with Jesus, God will send us by any means, or at times bring the nations to us (think immigration or invasion). Because remember this is the purpose of the world revealed in the Scriptures, reiterated in Mt 24:14, *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come....*

But that was all last week, this is this week...in this series we're talking about the inner spiritual formation of our hearts in Christ.

Comedian Sebastian Maniscalco said his wife tries to get him to smile, saying he has a mean resting face. That when he's just sitting there, not talking or doing anything, he looks as if he could murder your entire family. **Oscar Wilde said by the age of forty everyone has the face they deserve. A face which reveals your inner self!**

Now, you're all gonna go home & look in the mirror & wonder what your face says about you. We all have this conscious level of thinking which we & even others are aware of to some extent. **This thinking comes out in our words, expressed thoughts, feelings & plans for life.** It's the presentable self (and sometimes not-so-presentable self as we saw with some Eagles fans this past Sunday night).

Yet all of our outward conscious expressions of self are tainted with & driven by what lies underneath at the center of our world view; our heart of hearts. The deeper world of self, our spiritual self, we're not even fully aware, let alone another person. We operate out of it without realization for the most part. **Sort of like...one day when two younger fish were swimming through the ocean & ran into an older fish who said, "Morning boys, how's the water?" They continued swimming on, and after a moment one of the fish asked the other, "What's water?" This heart of hearts is the water in which we swim - our world view, and we can't always see it or understand it.**

I've been married to Kim for 25 years. I still don't understand the deeper recesses of her heart. I don't understand mine, and I've lived inside my own head for almost 51 years! **And by the way, climbing inside my head would be like walking a cheap haunted house at Halloween!**

A childhood friend posted a picture of our 1977 1st place signed baseball as a team, I was 10 years old. Facebook has enabled me to reconnect with people like this whom I haven't talked with in 30-40 years. Which always gets you thinking about life, what's formed you, how you grew up, what your influences were, traumas, high-points, why you do the things you do, or react the way you do to life & others...and the conclusion is our hearts are complicated, they've been formed for better or worse by people, environment, situations & experiences. Some of which aren't worthy of the reign we give them.

We don't understand our own hearts, which is why it's so dangerous to let pop-culture, another's opinion, the lady at the checkout counter having a bad day, the guy who gave you the finger in traffic, the evil Pink Floyd-like teacher from childhood, your teenage brother, our own deceitful hearts, or even 'experts' of any field define who we are. We are addicted to degrees, we believe anyone with letters behind their name no matter how absurd their claims, how simplistic they make a complicated thing, or how utterly chaotic their own lives are. We forget, behind those degrees are sinful, confused, frustrated, and sometimes quietly evil & vindictive people - just like us.

Humanity must go to God for it's identity, and He alone. I don't get it from my wife, my kids, being a pastor, what you think of me, being a victim, my past or current sin, my education, wealth or social status, none of that - **my identity springs from & is rooted in Jesus.**

I love David Foster Wallace's (writer & English professor) commencement speech given to Kenyon College in 2005. An atheist confessing he's all about himself - his spiritual self is a self-centered self. Everything revolves around him. He said when it's all about

you, everything & everyone frustrates. He urged the graduates to think beyond themselves, to have higher thoughts, care for others, look at things differently than their default way of seeing the world as that thing which is supposed to just serve them. He added, we all worship something, there are no true atheists, and it's better to worship something higher, rather than yourself.

But to David, it didn't matter what you choose to worship. His message was basically, do good, think better thoughts, worship something worthwhile, and die. David Foster Wallace killed himself 3 years later. I felt him to be so close to understanding, he was thoughtful, almost pastor-like, but he fell painfully short in refusing the Lordship of Jesus. It's my belief this is what drove his despair - the ability to see the need, but not seeing Jesus as the only answer to it.

What we choose to worship must have power to do spiritual surgery within our hearts, it must be greater than us - and nothing but Christ has that power & is able to do that surgery; he is the Great Physician. As he said, *"I am the Way & the Truth & the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (Jhn 14:6) He's exclusive in his claims not just for the sake of exclusivity, but because it's true. He is actually the Way, the Truth & the Life, and he would be not only lying to say you could find purpose, fulfillment & peace any other way, but he would be evil & misleading to do so. He's either Lord, Liar or Lunatic - and we all must make that choice. He doesn't leave us the luxury of saying he's just another good teacher, or to disregard his authority - he claimed to be the one & only true God who is the source of life & fulfillment for all humanity.

We need His thoughts downloaded to our minds - data input from the Creator of the human computer to our spiritual hard-drive. It's like Jesus becomes the new operating system & our quiet times & prayer lives are the periodic systematic updates needed to run it smoothly. Because we don't understand our own hearts. We think we know ourselves & others, until traumatic events happen & people act differently than expected.

For example, at one point during my ministry career I went totally silent. I know that's hard to believe. Never would've thought it, but outside of absolute necessity, I basically didn't talk to a soul. If asked a question, I shrugged, or gave a simple quick answer although I had thoughts. Anything to deflect & not have to talk. I didn't understand what was going on in me. It was a result of stress & failed expectations, but my reaction was stronger than I'd expected it to be. I had to get back to Jesus & reignite faith - had to let him do heart surgery once more.

The Psalmist knew this as he wrote in 139:1-6...You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

In other words not the Psalmist, nor any of us, have this ability to know anyone, even ourselves, to this level. We're not omniscient, we can't see the water we swim in. But thankfully God is omniscient. To be known like this is both our greatest desire & our greatest fear! If God were a tyrant, it'd be the worst news in the world. Because you can

hide your thoughts, your inner spiritual life from to some extent from all other tyrants. But thankfully Jesus is a god of grace & mercy!

But even so, we're not always in the habit of entrusting our heart to Him. Which is to live by faith. And faith being assured someone or something can satisfy a need in you.

Our trust & faith has too long been put into things which can only address the physical five senses. They don't touch on this spiritual inner life in only the way God can. Our societal presumption that science, technology & education would save the human soul has led to real despair - because the promises of this humanistic trinity have been left unrealized, and will continue to be. I have no problem with the three, I rely on them. But I'm fully aware they're unable to go to the depths we need them to, they can't address the ills of the human heart. They can't reach into the center of us, where only the Divine is able to tinker with the non-physical nature of the soul. We need Jesus. Plain & simple.

"Science promised much - a world free of disease. Just give it time & even death would be conquered while Walt Disney cryogenically awaits resurrection. But the greater the progress, the greater the destruction. Science has made many advancements for well-being, but we may find the advancements are outweighed by it's dark side.

Technology assumed any problem could be resolved if the right tool, method, or technology could be found. No need for God, or revelation. Man's problems are man-sized problems. He can handle them. All he needs is a little more time to find the right stuff to fix them. Technology gives good things. We all benefit. But, in spite of advancements, it's beginning to dawn on all but the most optimistic, the promises technology made are exaggerated & the downside could be greater than the good.

The third member of modernity's humanistic trinity is education. The twentieth century was to be the century when the West was to remove ignorance through education & eradicate evil in the world. Proponents of this enthronement of education saw the most basic problem in society as *ignorance*, not *sin*. They thought, "If we can just get people to think right, they'll live right." Education promised so much, but has fallen far short since it, like the other two, doesn't hold sway over the inner person. Education works well as a servant, but makes a poor king. As king, it brings only despair.

We thought they could save us: science, technology, education. These have been our gods - our sources of hope in a modern world. But all of the ongoing ills which continually plague our society like cancers have exposed these idols for what they are - presumptuous gods promoted by deceiving prophets."¹ Mankind on the throne of self.

Our deceived hearts latched on, shutting the door to Jesus, leaving him waiting outside, instead of in his rightful place on the throne of our hearts. Our prophets didn't bank on Kim Jong Un, Muslim Extremism, White Supremacists, randy comedians & actors, and others behaving badly! Those driven not by robotic, scientific, technological, well-educated, logical thought, but something deeper, something more sinister; the unchecked sinful self which is unconcerned about the well-being of others, or at the least vastly deceived by what it means to be concerned for others. Many kings have sat on

¹ *A Yellow Submarine*, Article by Bert Wagoner (former Vineyard US Director)

golden thrones eating steak while their people perish only to sincerely believe they've provided for their well-being in the best of ways. And many other intentionally oppress.

The 'Death of God' theological movement arose in the 1960's. One of the pioneers of the movement was Gabriel Vahanian. In 1961, Vahanian's book *The Death of God* was published. Vahanian argued that modern secular culture had lost all sense of the sacred, lacking any sacramental meaning, no transcendental purpose or sense of providence. He concluded that for the modern mind "God is dead". In Vahanian's vision a transformed post-Christian & post-modern culture was needed to create a renewed experience of deity. But like David Foster Wallace, what do you choose to worship? It has to be the all personal God who knows us inside & out, and with the power to change us internally.

And as the Psalmist continues in vv13-14 we see that only God knows us full well...For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

He not only speaks here of the physical creation, but the spiritual as well. It's this spiritual self which drives us & Kim Jong Un, in all our thinking & doing in life. It's not necessarily logical, and only addressing it from the outside behavioral or artifact level won't control it. The physical things of life are subservient to this spiritual self, although we have tried to move them above it, or replace the spiritual life with them. We must ask ourselves, what's more important, the car I drive, house I live in, job I have, my career, my sexual identity, how much I know about this or that subject? Or, is it how well I know, and am known by my Creator & how much my spiritual life reflects Jesus?

We betray ourselves by our gossip. This inner spiritual life is what we talk about in relation to others. News has become simply gossip of it. Who knows what's true anymore, we attack others at the character level, judging everyone, facts be damned, but at the same time we have no basis for our criticism since we've left Jesus, his standards, and teachings outside in the cold. And we really don't know why people do the things they do anyway - most is conjecture at best. And when pointing the finger, there are three pointing back at us!

And now in past decades we've seen a popularity rising in cardboard spiritualism in all it's various forms & with all it's prophets hanging their plank out to profit from the felt need of Americans since the humanistic trinity hasn't solved our ills. All preaching a gospel either clearly contrary to Jesus, or subtly more insidious in it's deceit; trying to pass off a saddled pig as an Arabian Stallion. Looking very religious, but disregarding the revealed word of God in all it's wisdom & richness.

It's all a vain attempt to address the pungent clamoring needs of the spiritual self, but with no compass to guide. We have not sought to grow in the knowledge of Christ who himself said, "*It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God,'*" quoting Deuteronomy 8:3 (Matthew & Luke ch 4).

And, the Psalmist knew this as he hungered for the Lord's words in vv 17, 23 & 24...*How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

The Psalmist models for us the person's sincere desire to turn off all other voices in the narrative of life, honing in on the one which matters most. He longs to know & be known by God, in all the glory & fear which comes with that. It's God's thoughts he acknowledges he can't fathom, but God's thoughts he knows he needs so desperately.

Man doesn't live on bread alone, and no one gave that statement more meaning than Jesus in that upper room just before his crucifixion. He uses the wine & the bread at mealtime to communicate the greater need to ingest his life. To take him into our interior life. And not in the way of transubstantiation (the conversion of the Eucharistic elements into the actual body & blood of Christ), as some religious orders would believe. But rather in a true & real spiritual sense, that he will dwell within our hearts changing us from the inside out. Jesus invades our being by heart conviction. And later he would confirm his statement & charge to those disciples by his death & resurrection. Man can't live by physical bread alone, the physical world can't solve our spiritual ills - only Jesus can, the true Bread of Life!

And like Ephesians 2:4-9 reveals, Jesus addresses the center bullseye of self, making us alive like nothing else can - changing us at the core of self, beginning with the inside working outward...*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

We're objects of his love, grace & mercy. He pursued us even to the point of entering our physical reality, becoming man & walking among us in order that we'd know his heart, and see it in action & have access to his transforming power. Even in our transgressions, he pursued! Which says that although in our sinful nature we deserve death - we're worthy of God's grace, because we're made in his image.

The message is, you're that special, even when we've fallen far away! And since our transgression is punishable by death, something perfect had to die. The only perfect human was Jesus, who took our place at the cross in order to satisfy that cost. And in his resurrection, he overcame sin & death lifting us up into the heavenly realms.

That's our identity in Jesus! Maybe our old self was worthy of death, but we're a creation of God, worthy of his grace in salvation due to that fact. So, he came, and we're made new; blessed, living examples of God's love to the world! He alone can address the spiritual core of our hearts need. David Foster Wallace was right, we need to dislodge ourselves from being the center of the universe, but what we replace our worship of self with must have the power to rule our heart & world. Nothing else can but Jesus.

We don't just get saved & that's it, but like Francis Shaeffer used to say, "I've found the present value of the blood of Christ." In other words living out life with Jesus daily. Constantly surprised by grace, constantly reliant on the only one who truly knows our hearts & can lead us in the way everlasting. Rose Marie Miller used to say, "There are those that marvel at the liberation that comes when you no longer think of the Gospel as a message relevant only to nonChristians." Many of us know the lyrics of the Gospel, but



aren't hearing the music...and Jesus stands with open arms to walk this out with us. It's time to join him...let him address your heart as only he can.

Use your Lectio Divina Journals. Use your Ruin to Renovation binders. Memorize the Roman Road verses. Pray. Fellowship. Go to Community Groups. Worship well on Sundays together. Everything's spiritual, be an influence. Be Christ to one another & to the world around you, since Jesus as mere fire insurance has no relevance to anyone.