

<b>Series:</b> Colossians	<b>Reference:</b> <i>Colossians 3:1-11</i>	<b>Title:</b> When Heart Meets Mind	<b>Date:</b> 1.17.2021
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In art, when heart & mind commingle in the work, masterpieces are born. Paul says here our hearts & minds coming together in Christ produce a masterpiece of the Christian Life.			

When drawing a person, you have three choices. You could just draw out of pure emotion. Allowing your heart to rule your hand, you could scribble across the page & come out with not much recognizable. Or, you can draw by the rules, which would mean probably, you have two eyes, a nose, mouth, two ears, all that makes up a person, but your drawing would be devoid of life.

Or, you could marry the head & heart coming up with, not only a strong likeness, but the essence of your model sitting before you. In my art classes & they'd say, "*Draw what you see.*" I'd try to focus us on what I *really saw* instead of what my brain told me was there. Because when you're looking at a person about to draw them your brain tells you, two ears, two eyes, etc. It wants to merely go by the rules. I had been to the anatomy lab & had taken apart cadavers to see bone & muscle structure. I'd practiced perspective & proportion - all the rules which accompany drawing. What my professor was trying to get us to do was to use all that knowledge to draw *those* two ears, *those* two eyes & *that* mouth which sat in front of me. In the beginning you work, fighting your brain. It wanted to put an eye there in the shape of an almond with a few circles inside & be done with it, but that's not what you really saw.

The brain wants to constrain everything within lines, when in actuality the models hair may fade into the black cloth behind them. Or, from your angle the eyelashes are faint & sort of just small whispers, but you know they're there so you draw them in. And your professor would come by & say, "Now, can you really see that? I can't. Start over."

You need the brain & rules. But the brain has to be in balance with the heart, you have to feel the drawing too. The brain recognizes the physical facts, the heart interprets them onto the paper as they really are. If the brain takes over like it wants to, your drawing comes out cold & dead, but recognizable. But if you can train the brain & heart to rely on what the eyes see, working together, you have the makings of a masterpiece. In the beginning your drawings seem to get worse, you have to learn to look more at the model than your paper. Training your grey matter to listen to the heart, soaking in what the eyes were feeding them both. All the while, you are assimilating facts, bone & muscular structure under the skin, mood of the moment, feeling in the eye, contrasts of dark & light, tone & shade, etc.

As your eye travels across the peaks & valleys, the contour of their skin, your hand starts to move in the right way on paper. Then your head screams, "Put the mouth here!," and you'd have to erase & start over. Art's much like the Christian life. At times I fall back

into the rules. At others, my life seems to be led only by the heart. Bringing the two together, focused on Christ as my model, what a life that is.

*Listen to what Paul has to say about it in Colossians 3:1-4...1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

We need to gaze on Jesus as our model. But, how do we bring the mind & heart together?

We tend to look down focusing on the rules, like an artist focusing more on the paper than on their model, we focus on the earthly things. Placing our gaze on what we *think's* right - a stylized version of Jesus. We need to train our eye to see what's really there. We think we know what the Christian life is, don't do this, don't do that, don't go here or there, go to church, go to bible study, etc. And, some of these rules aren't bad rules, but it's not creating a masterpiece. And, we can't disregard the rules altogether.

Worse yet, we forget the rules which really matter! Paul says *since then, you have been raised with Christ*. Your Christian life's born out of your position in Him. In the previous verses he talks of being baptized in Christ, raised to spiritual life & freedom. Jesus is the model sitting before us. Heart & mind must meet while you gaze on this model. We said last week, we need to 'live in Christ', translated to 'walk-about in Jesus'. So as He sits before us we need to train our brains to understand who He really is. Looking. Studying. Allowing your eyes to follow the contours of His face, wounded hands & side, allowing your brain tell you what's true, He sacrificed for you. Extended grace. Paid the price. Your model, power & sustenance. He's everything.

Notice Paul says here...*'set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.'*

*Set your heart & mind on Jesus. Allowing Him to define who He is as you gaze on Him. Let Him tell you the facts. Our gaze, as we draw out our lives, should always be focused on Him. The Gnostics would've said secret things are hidden away from regular folk. They had books with secret wisdom, but the secret wisdom is Jesus. We're hidden away in Him.*

Then in context of who Jesus is to us Paul gives some imperatives...*5Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires & greed, which is idolatry. 6Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.*

Firstly, Paul states a list of *sensual sins*. Maybe the Colossians were struggling in this area so he focused there. His wording's strong. It's not 'avoid', or 'don't do that' rather 'put to death'. Firstly, *Sexual immorality*, a general term referring to any form of illicit sexual behavior. We derive our word pornography from this Greek word. Secondly, *Impurity* marked by a mind filled with sensually suggestive thoughts which reads sex into even the most wholesome situation. Then, *Lust* which seeks to get quick fulfillment & always wants more. Love takes work & deepens over time. Lust focuses only on the senses, but love uses the senses to cherish another & nourish the soul. Fourthly, *Evil Desires*, our physical desires are divinely given, but they become evil when motivated by the sinful nature & executed for evil ends. Desire leads to deed, so we purify mind & heart. Finally, *Greed, which is idolatry*, the sin of always wanting more. In this context, it may apply to greed of satisfying evil desires & sexual immorality. The person never satisfied with what they have is envious of what others do, leading to idolatry, when things, people & even the 'Self' end up taking the place of God.

When eyes are taken off of Jesus & the blessings of that relationship we easily plunge into a dark private life. I want to read you the story of a friend of mine who experienced just that (*James' testimony*).

*I'd been a believer in Christ for many years, but that didn't guarantee my heart & my mind were 'set on the things above where Christ is seated'. I'd heard many great sermons & had been involved in leadership in various ministries, but that was not a guarantee either. Simply put, rather than believing my life was hidden with Christ in God, that Christ really was my life, I looked for life in a million other places. I tried to find life in winning the good opinion of others, intellectual prowess, or achieving a cool & sophisticated detachment from the troubles of the world.*

*But in my search for life, those efforts were nothing compared to my pursuit of pornography. I ran to magazines, videos, gentlemen's clubs & just about any other form of fleshly indulgence I could short of becoming physically involved with a woman other than my wife. I was looking for that thrill of feeling alive, of joy, the rush which made my heart beat fast. I sought ecstasy, an idolator of the highest order, even though I was a Christian.*

*These attempts always failed. Ironically, the more I indulged, the more lost & dead I became. I always felt the rush from my experiences, but it never satisfied. Instead, I kept running to one experience after another to deal with the pain leftover in the aftermath of the most recent indulgence. As I cycled deeper & deeper into my addiction, God intervened & exposed my sin. Despite the deep shame of being outed, I realized God was doing me a favor & saving my life.*

*My wife writhed in emotional pain & God didn't shield me from it, or from her outright anger at the betrayal. I'd presented myself to her, and the rest of the world, as a godly man of integrity - that lie had been shattered. As I saw the devastation of my deception, God reminded me once again, only in Christ could I find true life. He brought alongside me a group of men in a Bible study who helped me see truth again &*

*used a Biblical counselor with an expertise in sexual sin to show me again that being made alive with Christ really meant something significant.*

*Setting my heart & mind on Christ actually involved doing things like, agreeing with God about sin, renouncing my previous life in pornography & calling on His power daily in order to live rightly. In the early weeks & months following God's intervention, life was difficult. I wasn't sure I could set my heart & mind on Christ. But God was amazing. He honored every small step of faith & healed my Heart such that I could set it on Christ. Now, years later, I can say Christ really is my life. I set my heart & mind on Christ continually by turning to Him when temptation strikes, but more than that, by turning to Him at all times in order to truly live. The more I focus on the truth of who Jesus is, the more I rid myself of pornography.*

*If we focus on Christ these things are naturally put to death. Paul uses the same logic in Romans 8:13 "If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live." And in Galatians 5:16 '16So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.' No great need to focus on the rules, just focus on Jesus & these things will die off naturally. Paul continues in Colossians 3...8But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander & filthy language from your lips. 9Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

*Notice it's the knowledge of who Christ which renews you! Here now is a list of *social sins*. Firstly, *Anger* a continuous attitude of hatred bottled up within. Then, *Rage* which comes bursting out uncontrollably. *Malice*, an attitude of ill will towards a person, hidden hatred of the heart, taking revenge in secret. *Slander*, when we destroy another person's reputation by lies, gossip & spreading rumors. *Filthy Language*, crude talk or abrasive words damaging to others. And *Lying*, which disrupts unity by destroying trust, tearing down relationships, leading to conflicts.*

*Paul considers these things serious, or he'd not mention them. We can all say we've seen the effects of these social sins. We've lied, or gossiped, or seen others do so & the destruction it brings. One of the things which hit me hardest when I was a kid, maybe around 14 years old, was when my father said, "I can't believe you lied to me, I can't trust you anymore." It was good he said it. It devastated me that I'd broken trust with him. Words are strong, they are our greatest weapon or the greatest tool of life as well.*

*Paul Rusesabagina, the hotel manager in Rwanda during the Hutu/Tutsi conflict, explains this well in his book, *An Ordinary Man*. He explains how words can be used to take or give life. (Explain the background a little & then read Introduction XIV – XVI.)*

*Angry words, lying & gossip kill emotionally, spiritually & even physically. Likewise, words used rightly bring life. Christian's have a new set of values. It'd be easy for us to focus on these rules, don't look at pornography, don't gossip, don't hate. Although these are good to avoid, but by focusing on rules alone we produce cold, dead judgmental*

lives. What Paul's doing is what my art professors tried with me. He wants me to focus my attention on my model. To operate out of who I am in Jesus. Looking so intently on who Jesus is, good things naturally become a part of me. Acknowledging what Jesus has done for me, I see myself as redressed. This would've been a vivid picture to the early church since they were in the habit of taking off their dirty clothes before baptism, then putting on a white robe as they came up out of the water symbolizing a change of life. I'm being renewed, as I gaze & study Him for who He is, His perspective & worldview seep into my soul & I react to life more & more as He does.

When someone slanders, hits, or hates me, I don't retaliate, strike, or hate back. Love grows. A desire to bring life & not take it comes about. When I see beautiful women giving themselves freely sexually, I'm no longer aroused, but feel sorry for them. When the world tells me I need this or that, I realize it's Jesus who brings me wholeness – there's not a hole to fill in me, He's not already filled. The cosmic dance. To look on Jesus as you draw out life. Keeping eyes focused on your model, walking about in Him, realizing all He's done for you. An eternal perspective, knowing He'll bring you to glory. Paul uses words here of present & future benefits of keeping our eyes on Jesus.

Lastly, this focus on Jesus eradicates barriers between people...<sup>11</sup>“*Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*” It was deeply radical that the Gospel reaches across social, economic & class barriers! The Jew considered the Gentile to be a dog. As God's chosen people they tended to look on others as less. The Greek thought themselves better than all others, especially the Barbarian. They were the aristocrats & very aware of it. The Scythian was looked on as the lowest of barbarians. Josephus called them little short of a wild beast. The slave was a living tool, not even classified as a human. The slave had no rights, a master could kill, beat, brand, or maim them at will. They didn't even have the right to marry. There was absolutely no way a free person & a slave could have any relationship other than the slave being used as a tool.

In the presence of Jesus, when we've all gazed on Him throughout history, the barriers have fallen away & all peoples have become brother & sister. You see this in Acts when people were gathered from all the various nations, hearing the Gospel in their own language! An amazing thing in the early church was that slaves could pastor as their masters sat under their teaching! And the Gospel changed how their masters treated them! When God's people focus on Jesus, amazing things happen. Life grows. Barriers fall down. But when we take our eyes off Him, as we've heard in past weeks, terrible things happen even in His name.

The movie *Crash* is brilliant, revealing all the characters have this racist/prejudice tendency in them. An *us vs. them* attitude (We & They, Rudyard Kipling), where simple words & reaction to someone different drives all these characters to destroy each other. It's worth a view. I watched it once with a friend. At the end of the movie they said, “Well, they still have those problems I guess in LA (where the movie was situated) but we don't have them in Oklahoma anymore.” But, I'd asked them to watch it in reference

to some very negative comments they'd made towards African Americans. It went right over their head.

It happens in Churches. There's a growing gap in communication & worldview of generations. We vilify the other only because of differences in dress, worship styles, how we say things, view life, or what we prioritize. Some see a suit & cringe. Or dreadlocks. We put people in boxes, 'He's liberal', 'She's a fundy', I don't want to talk to them'. Assumptions, avoidance, we push people away. But when you gaze into the eyes of Christ, who'd He die for? He died for that suit, that fundy, that guy with the gages in his ears, or with different views & there's nothing wrong with them, any more than me.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the WWII German pastor, eventually murdered for his resistance to the Nazis, thought much about Christian community. *He put it this way, "Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize, it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we must participate."*

In Ephesians 2:11-18 the writer talks about the dividing walls of hostility between people being broken down in Christ. Ethnic, gender & socio-economic walls. The fence that kept the Outer Court of the Gentiles separate from the Inner Courts of the Temple, has been taken down. This had become a wall of hostility between Jew & Gentile - a physical representation of the hearts of people which it was never meant to be. The Temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations, the very place others would find God & be welcomed in! Everyone has access to God in the same manner, always did, but even more so in Christ. I don't think we realize how much the Gospel has done to break down barriers! Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'. Look at serving others, no matter how different than you they are, as serving Jesus.

*One of the guiding principles in missions is contextualization. Which means you speak their language, bringing the Gospel into their context, using their culture to interpret & make it clear. We make it familiar to *them* so all barriers of communication are taken away. If a person wants to reject the Gospel - they reject it rather than a white American construct of the Gospel. But the problem with this is there's little good teaching of breaking down barriers to others. In other words, if you communicate the Gospel to a Lampungese guy only in his culture without telling him that eventually he has to love the Chinese, what you might produce is only a Lampungese church which cares only for the Lampungese & continues to hate the Chinese. In 50 years they'll be ineffective in living out the Great Commission in Matthew 28 since they're only focused on themselves & their sin of racism is alive & well. The Gospel must be preached in full to all people including the repentance & forgiveness needed to be free of our sinful leanings.*

In art, when heart & mind commingle in the work, masterpieces are born. Paul says our hearts & minds coming together in Christ produce a masterpiece of the Christian Life. Let yours meet in Christ as you gaze on your model drawing out your life.