



“Revolution No. 7: Pure in Heart”

Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor

May 18, 2008

CrossRoad Church UMC

=====

The Word: Matthew 5:1-12 (NRSV)

A. Matthew 5:1-12 (NRSV) When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. {2} Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: {3} "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {4} "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. {5} "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. {6} "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. {7} "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. {8} "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. {9} "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. {10} "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. {12} Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

B. Recently, one of my close friends and fellow pastor almost died from Congestive Heart Failure.

C. It came as a shock to all of us who are close to him.

D. On the outside, he was one of the fittest and most physical of a group of us who have been friends for almost 40 years.

E. Though he regularly worked out and was involved in lots of physical activity and led a fairly healthy lifestyle, most of us didn't know that he had been diagnosed with High Pressure about 8 years ago.

1. He been prescribed medication, but after a while he decided it really wasn't helping him and he actually felt better when he wasn't taking it.
2. His cholesterol always seemed to be in a healthy range, but he was more at risk from his intake of sodium.

F. Fortunately, it was discovered in time for him to begin to make some major lifestyle changes and after about 3 months of rest, rehab, medication and close scrutiny of his Sodium intake he is back to good health.

G. *John Eldredge* writes in *Waking the Dead* p. 39-41 "The subject of the heart is addressed in the Bible more than any other topic--more than works or service, more than belief or obedience, more than money, and even more than worship. Maybe God knows something we've forgotten."

H."According to the Scriptures, the heart can be troubled, wounded, pierced, grieved, even broken...it can also be cheerful, glad, merry, joyful, rejoicing. The heart can be whole or divided...It can be wise or foolish. It can be steadfast, true, upright, stout, valiant. It can also be frightened, faint, cowardly, melt like wax. The heart can be wandering, forgetful, dull, stubborn, proud, hardened. Wicked and perverse.

I. *"Much to our surprise, according to Jesus, a heart can also be pure as in, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God' (Matthew 5:8)*

II. The Pure Heart Problem

A. Several years ago I was really struggling with my call to the ministry.

B. When I started college, I took one of those career/aptitude/personality tests. All of my indicators advised that I not consider the ministry, because I love to see concrete signs of progress. I need to be able to measure progress.

C. The ministry is really not one of those callings where measuring progress is always seen as a good thing.

1. You can measure it by the buildings you build, the money you raise, the people you tick off or the number of those you don't, how many people answer an altar, are baptized, are members are sit in the seats each Sunday.

D. I came home that afternoon and laid down on the couch and started to watch Oprah.

1. She was interviewing a group of young adults who had overcome some physical disabilities through either Physical Therapy, Orthopedic Surgery or Cosmetic surgery.
2. I began to entertain leaving the ministry and going Medical School.
3. I thought it must be incredibly gratifying to be able to see physical changes that help people overcome some physical disability.

E. In the ministry, it is so hard to be able to know the condition of your own heart, and even harder to know that what you are doing is actually making any difference at all.

F. When God spoke to the prophet Samuel about David as his choice for King of Israel and not Saul, he had to warn Samuel not to look at David's outward appearance. *1 Samuel 16:7 (NRSV) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."*

G. There is only one thing that really matters, the condition of a person's heart.

B. Curly uses Cowboy wisdom that says it is One thing.

C. God's Word brings a little more illumination

D. *Deuteronomy 6:5 (NRSV) You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*

E. A young lawyer questions Jesus *Matthew 22:34-39 (NRSV) When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, {35} and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. {36} "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"*

F. The young man wanted to know which of the 10 commandments, if there was just one that if you kept it you would please God. What one action, what behavior would put me in God's Grace.

G. {37} *He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." {38} This is the greatest and first commandment. {39} And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

H. Mark records a version that Jesus adds strength *Mark 12: {30} you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'*

I. The religious people of Jesus day, and even now tend to look at what is outside, and tend to view the external influences as what corrupts us. The Biblical view of Humanity is that we are corrupted on the inside and that even if we get the external things right, our inner person, our heart can still be corrupt.

J. *Matthew 15:8-9 (NRSV) "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; {9} in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines."*

K. *Matthew 15:17-20 (NRSV) Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? {18} But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. {19} For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. {20} These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."*

L. *Proverbs 21:2 (NRSV) All deeds are right in the sight of the doer, but the LORD weighs the heart.*

M. It really boils down to this statement of Jesus, *Luke 12:34 (NRSV) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

V. A Pure Heart requires Trust.

A. *Proverbs 3:5 (NRSV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.*

B. *2 Chronicles 16:9 (NRSV) For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the entire earth, to strengthen those whose heart is true to him. You have done foolishly in this; for from now on you will*

have wars."

C.You can't measure trust.

D.There is no single action that indicates the condition of persons heart.

E.Yet, you can know it. You can even sense in your own life.

F.Grace Gilbert and her family has shown a lot of trust in Jesus that comes from their relationship with Jesus.

1. Grace spent a lot of her days on the couch in their family room.
2. On the Saturday that she died, by the afternoon that old couch was on the side of street waiting to be picked up.
3. Within a few days, they had bought a new sofa.
4. That is trust.

VI. Our heart must be transformed

A.*Waking the Dead, John Eldredge p. 58-59 "Most of the misery we suffer on this planet, is the fruit of the human heart gone bad."*

B.*Genesis 6:5-6 (NRSV) The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. {6} And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.*

C.*Genesis 6:6 (NIV) The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*

D."*This is the first mention of God's heart in the Bible, by the way, and it's a sad beginning, to be sure. His heart is broken because ours is fallen.*"

E."*Most of the world religions concur on this point. Something needs to be done.*"

F."*But the usual remedies involved some sort of shaping up on our part, some sort of face-lift whereby we clean up our act and start behaving as we should. Jews try to keep the Law. Buddhists follow the Eightfold Path. Muslims live by the Five Pillars. Many Christians try church attendance and moral living. You'd think, with all the effort, humanity would be on top of things by now....we quite misdiagnosed the disease. The problem is not in our behavior; the problem is in us. Jesus said, 'For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander' (Matt. 15:19). We don't need an upgrade. We need transformation. We need a miracle.*"

G.*Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NRSV) A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. {27} I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.*

H.Eldredge "It's not just that the Cross did something for us. Something deep and profound happened to us in the death of Christ....You've been far more than forgiven. God has removed your heart of stone. You've been delivered of what held you back from what you were meant to be. You've been rescued from the part of you that sabotages even your best intentions. Your heart has been circumcised to God. Your heart has been set free."

VII. Our Heart is God's Dwelling Place

A.Ephesians 3:16 (NRSV) I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, {17} and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

B. There is a legend told of a desert nomad who found a crystal spring of pure water. It was so pure he decided to bring some to his king. Barely satisfying his own thirst, he filled a leather bottle with the clear liquid and carried it many days beneath the desert sun before he reached the palace. When he finally laid his offering at the feet of his king, the water had become stale and rank due to the old container in which it had been stored. But the king would not let his faithful subject even imagine that it was unfit for use. He tasted it with expressions of gratitude and delight, and sent away the loyal heart filled with gladness. After he had gone, others sampled it and expressed their surprise that the king had even pretended to enjoy it. "Ah!" said he, "it was not the water he tasted, but the love that prompted the offering."

C.2 Corinthians 4:7 (NASB) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;

D. Our lives are marred by multiplied imperfections, but the God looks at our hearts and sees past the corrupt vessel and can taste our pure love, our trust, our motivations.

E. What many of won't be able to see with our eyes, God will be able to taste the intentions of our heart.

F. Ultimately, it is God's presence in our earthly vessels that makes us pure.

VIII. Invitation to have a transformed heart.