

Pentecost #14

8-29-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Jesus protests against human customs being given the weight of divine law, while the essence of God’s law is ignored. True uncleanness comes not from external things, but from the intentions of the heart. Last week Jesus told us, ‘the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.’ (John 6:63).” Now James says God has given us birth by the word of truth. We who were washed in the word when we were born in the font return to it every Sunday to ask God to create in us clean hearts,”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“O Day of Rest and Gladness”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 15

“O Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tent?
Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?
²He who walks blamelessly, and does what is right,
and speaks truth from his heart;
³who does not slander with his tongue,
and does no evil to his friend,
nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor;
⁴in whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
but who honors those who fear the Lord;
who swears to his own hurt and does not change;
⁵who does not put out his money at interest,
and does not take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these things shall never be moved.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O God our strength, without you we are weak and wayward creatures. Protect us from all dangers that attack us from the outside, and cleanse us from all evil that arises from within ourselves, that we may be preserved through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9](#)

2nd Reading: [James 1:17-27](#)

The Gospel: [Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Lord Jesus, Think of Me”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

When we hear the word heart our thoughts probably immediately think about all that is good in life for our minds bring up thoughts of love. After all isn't the heart the international symbol of love and romance? We honor this symbol of love every year with a much beloved holiday for many Valentine's Day, a day to especially recognized and even celebrate our love relationships. When love is failed we label that as having a broken heart which brings the feeling and emotion of emptiness and even sadness. But even during the times of denied love, the heart, though broken, holds forth the promise of the reality of love.

Yes the heart is considered to be the center of love but also it is and has been considered to be the center of life itself for it is the heartbeat of life. It is the heartbeat which pumps the lifeblood throughout the body giving all living creatures a physical life. When the heart stops beating then the physical life comes to an end and deterioration takes over. Since it is the heart which is the keeper of life then it follows that it is the essence of life found within each of us. This essence is the soul or that which makes us unique. It is essentially that which motivates us gives us that persona which is visible to the outside world. Therefore, the heart is symbolically considered to be how our life is directed and motivated.

If the heart is the seat of love and the heart is the motivator of life how can life produce that which may be negative, bad, or evil? This is where our humanity comes into play for human love can be directed towards all kinds of wants and desires. This is when love becomes enslaved to self, greed, pride, fortune, power, and the like. The love of the pursuit of momentary earthly satisfaction thus comes from a heart which houses a corrupted form of love. It is this corrupted form of love which becomes that soul of the inner being and becomes our persona. It is out this that our intentions find reality.

This is what Jesus was saying “For it is from within, from the human heart, that intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” It is the inner being which directs our lives not that which comes from the outside. I think it was Flip Wilson who said, “The devil made me do it.” Well to this it must be said the devil made me do nothing at all. The self had to allow the devil to influence the heart which then becomes a driving force within life. Thus the self chooses to be what it is; nobody makes the self do anything it does not agree to do or to be.

So often this may be all too true for us for we can easily succumb to peer or societal pressures. Everybody else is doing it so that it is perfectly OK to do it myself. So we let that take control of our heart and lives. Nobody forced this upon us nor did they just enter our lives without us allowing that to happen. We choose to have them take control. It is when we let this control our lives that is when we see the results of this control reflected in our lives. These cannot be hidden for our lives reflect what is in our hearts. All of the external evil and negatives which we see and experience in life are not which determines who we are but it is that which we take to heart. It is what we choose to take to heart that will determine what we say, do, and how we live and determines who we really are. It is upon this that we are judged.

Jesus was making this point when He said "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." At this point he was speaking about the observance of the ritualistic laws of the washing of the hands since the Pharisees and scribes were questioning Jesus and His disciples for not following the ritualistic practice of the washing of hands before eating. The authorities of the law said that this is what defiled a person and was what determined the very core of being and intent of the heart. The Pharisees maintained that the ritualistic practices are what guided and motivated one's relationship with God. Without these outside rituals one's heart could not have the presence of God and His love within it.

Jesus clearly rebukes any notion that the external rituals are the actual determination of what is held within the heart. They just may be rituals for the ritual's sake and may not be the true expression of one's heart. Rituals in and of themselves may and often become a cover-up for what is lurking within a heart that has been corrupted. Rituals are not the heart and soul of religion and not the heart and soul of Christianity. So often the external rituals become a lip service in order to look nice among others. They may be the expression of a misguided piety which only ends at the barrier of a dead end street. Shakespeare in Macbeth defined such a life as: "life is but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing."

Jesus quoted Isaiah to describe such outward displays of piety: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." Making rituals and tradition sacred so they become the motivation of the heart is to avoid the true will of God as brought to us by Jesus. This message of the will of God is clearly given throughout the gospels and that is to have the heart dominated by God's love. Jesus continues, "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Jesus in this confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees clearly speaks to the church today and to today's society. The traditions of the church for so many are their religion and therefore have little to do with the motivation of the heart except to preserve them. This is also true within our society. Just because attending church and singing hymns and listening to scriptures is not a measure of being Christian It is not a measure of what is in the heart. In fact these acts could very well try to disguise the very intent of our hearts and can be diametrically opposite to

the Christianity. The true evil intent of the heart can hide behind Christianity and when this happens this is heresy. This is most evident today when the true intent of the heart uses God's word to justify political ideologies and personal agendas.

This is not to say that ritual, tradition, and even Church going have no role to play for when placed in their proper perspective they not only give an expression of a love filled heart but can nourish the true meaning of the heart. They can bring some stability to life when everything is unstable. They can acknowledge God's presence in our inner being as long as they do not become that inner being.

Ritual and tradition can have value but it is how life is lived day in and day out which is the true indication of one's heart, a true indication of our inner soul. The joy which we have to live is when that inner being, found within the heart, is governed by God's love for then we are less likely to suffer the guilt and even pain of hurting others and in the long run hurting ourselves. We need not be a part of Shakespeare definition of life as a "...poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage then is heard no more...." No, the promise of a heart filled with God's love is just the opposite for it is a life which lives in God's presence finding peace, meaning, and fulfillment throughout all eternity. It is this heart filled and overflowing in love which is so needed today's ever increasing problem filled world. It is the love of our hearts which can make the difference for herein lies our hope.

Anthem: ["I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Down in My Heart"](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Our loving Father of all, every day we seem to find that life at this time present an increasing amount of problems to overcome. There is little doubt that we need the wisdom of your presence to help us meet these challenges. May your presence within us give us the courage, understanding, perseverance and love during these trying times. Lead us to the truth and open our eyes so that we will not be led by those who promote pain, suffering, death and destruction. Comfort and bring healing to those who are suffering from the pandemic as well as the many natural disaster which have plagued us. Help us to find resolution to the problems as a result of warfare.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack

Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della , Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Jesus, Still Lead On"](#)

Announcements

Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions force us indoors. Face masks and social distancing outdoors are not required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors.

*Offering to be sent to:
Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291