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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, February 7, 2010 – Communion Sunday
"A Genuine Heart For Jesus?!"
Mark 12:28-31; Mark 4:1-20

The human physical heart is an amazing creation.

At the normal rate, it beats about 100,000 times a day, some 40 million times a year.

In the course of a lifetime the heart beats more than 2 billion times without ever shutting down for repairs.

It pumps 10,000 quarts of blood through the blood vessels every day – some 264,175,000 quarts in a lifetime. That's enough to fill a larger modern skyscraper.

Despite all this activity, one's heart takes one-sixteenth second for complete rest between beats.

This means that we live our lives with our hearts actually standing still for years!

No wonder the Psalmist writes, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

As we have an amazing physical heart given to us by the biblical God, we also have an incredible spiritual heart that is made in the image of God.

That's why in our text for today, Mark 12:30 records the words of Jesus as He quotes from the Old Testament,

"And 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."

This is the answer that Jesus gave to the Scribe who asked our Lord, "What is the foremost or greatest commandment?"

Jesus quoted from the Shema (from the first word, HEAR, found in Deuteronomy 6:5. In fact if you check out Deuteronomy 6:5, you will see that Jesus added "mind" to this verse. He evidently felt that would amplify the commandment more). Jesus, then, quoted from the beginning of the Shema in Mark 12:29, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God is one LORD." **The Shema became Israel's confession of faith. Added to Deuteronomy 6:5 were Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41. According to rabbinic law the Shema was recited in the morning and in the evening.**

Jesus added that the next most important commandment was, "You shall love the Lord your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Jesus concluded that there was no other commandment greater than these. Interestingly Jesus didn't recite the Ten Commandments here. He knew that loving one's neighbor fulfilled the rest of the law as Romans 13:9-10 and Galatians 5:14 states.

Jesus also knew if one loved God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength (a summary of the first four commandments) one would fulfill the rest of them by loving one's neighbor. How succinctly Jesus summarized the old Mosaic law.

But what does it mean to love the LORD your God with all one's heart?

To answer that question, let's ask several questions.

I. What does the word, heart, mean?

The word that is used for heart in our text is "kardia." It's the word from which we get our word for the physical heart today. But in our text and in the New Testament, the word, kardia, doesn't refer to the physical heart each of us has, **rather the word, heart, refers to our immaterial heart, our spiritual heart.** It

describes our seat of feelings, our affections, our desires, or seat of intellect, our emotions, and will. It's that immaterial part of us which is our personality that makes each of us a unique creation in the image of God.

Now the main word for heart in the Old Testament is "leb or lebab." It means the same thing, the seat of our thoughts, affections, and will. It is that immaterial part that God has given each of us like unto His mind, emotion and will.

When Jesus says, using that Scripture, that we are to love the Lord our God with all your heart, He is telling us that we are to love the LORD not with just a part of our heart but our whole heart, all of our mind, emotion and will. Adding soul, Jesus is emphasizing our whole life, adding mind, He is saying with a complete understanding, and then adding strength, Jesus is saying with all our energy.

Summarized, Jesus is telling us that we are to love the LORD our God with a passionate whole heart – a mind, emotion and will that is passionately and enthusiastically loving HIM.

This leads to our second question.

II. How can we love God with our whole heart?

This involves several areas.

1. We need to look at what our hearts are like outside of Christ – not knowing Christ as personal Savior.

Romans 1:21 – Rejecting God, "Their foolish heart was darkened." Hearts were foolish because they rejected the Lord. The fool has said in his heart that there is no God (Psalm 14:1).

Romans 1:24 – Our hearts outside of Christ are impure and act impurely. "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, impure thoughts and actions, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them."

Romans 2:5 – Our hearts outside of Christ are hard, stubborn, abstinent, and impenitent. "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Ephesians 4:18 – Outside of Christ the individual is spiritually blind, no spiritual understanding or perception. "Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." Hardness means petrified, callused, insensitive.

Jeremiah 3:17 – "Nor shall they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart." Referring to when Israel turns back to the Lord.

Jeremiah 17:9 – "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can understand it?" Deceit fills the heart outside of Christ.

This is why Christ taught in Mark 7:21-23

"For from within, out of the heart of man (His spiritual part, His immaterial part of mind, emotion, and will) proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from man and defile the man.

Not a pretty picture to say the least. Our spiritual hearts in Adam don't seek after God's pure righteousness and holiness. Yes, we try to reform the heart. We try to educate the heart. We try to put the person with a sinful heart in a new environment. There may seem to be a change for awhile, but the heart still is deceitful and stubborn. Is there something better??

That's why there is another aspect to this consideration of how to love God with our all of our heart. Put very succinctly.

2. We must understand that we need a new heart.

That's why Jesus said that He did not come to put new wine into the old wine skins. He didn't come to fix up our hearts or to reform our hearts. He came to put new wine into new wine skins. He came to make a new heart for us who have hard, spiritual blind, deceitful, and evil hearts. That's why Jesus said that we must be born from above. We need a new heart.

(1) How is that accomplished for us? (Through the Gospel).

II Corinthians 4:4-6 tells us that it is the Light Of The Glorious Gospel shining into our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

It is the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ, that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin, was buried, and rose again to give us forgiveness and eternal life – Yes to give us a new heart – new nature – Christ's very resurrection – a new nature living within us.

It's through His gospel that Jesus provides us a new heart – a new life, a new nature.

(2) How do we receive the new heart Jesus has won for us? (By faith).

"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God" (John 1:12).

"That is you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

It's by faith, accepting Christ as one's Savior that one receives the new heart Jesus has won for us through His death, burial and bodily resurrection.

I trust you have made that decision to accept Christ as your personal Savior and know today without a shadow of a doubt that you belong to Him for His Spirit bears witness to your spirit that you are His forever.

(3) What does that mean for us now as a believers in Jesus Christ? (Living with and for Christ).

Through faith in Jesus Christ, the believer has that new nature (II Peter 1:4), a new heart. We are partakers of the divine nature, the very life of God, God's new heart given to us through faith in Jesus.

That new heart, that new nature includes:

****A new mind – (Christ's Thoughts)** Able to think God's thoughts through reading the Word of God. The believer has the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16). It's not a selfish mind, but a selfless mind. It's not an arrogant mind, but a teachable mind. It's not a inconsiderate mind, but a mind that sees beyond what people wear to what's in their heart. It's the mind that wants to think God's thoughts as revealed in the God's Word. Yes, the believer is now to bring all of His thoughts into captivity to Christ – to His mind within him or her.

****A new emotion – (Christ's Love)** The love of God is poured into the believer's heart through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:5).. It's the love that God has in Himself, and displayed in Christ's eternal love for us by going to Calvary on our behalf to win us eternal redemption. It's agape love. It's love that is tough yet tender. It is love that forgives. It's love that does not keep track of wrongs committed. It is love that keeps on trucking in spite of the circumstances. It's love that says I love you too much to keep from telling you that you need to make some changes in your life. It is love that gives without expecting anything in return. It's Calvary love. Man in himself, in his old heart, has nothing like it.

****A new will - (Christ's Obedience)** Now with Christ's new will living in the believer, he or she wants to obey God like HE did on earth - doing His will, pleasing Him as recorded in the Word of God.

Paul writes in Romans 6:17, that you were slaves to sin, but you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed. Romans 6:22 – Freed from sin and enslaved to God – **God' servants with His will to do His will for His glory.**

With the mind, love, and will of God at work in the believer's life, the believer will love (the same word for love that is used to describe God's love for us) God with His whole heart. Why? For now the believer has a new heart that will love God completely.

4. How is the new heart displayed in our lives as followers of Christ?

The believer can't think Christ's thoughts, show Christ's love and obey Him without depending on the Holy Spirit in his or her life. Keeping sensitive to the Holy Spirit the believer can truly love God with His whole heart.

That's why the Scripture exhorts us to be filled continually (controlled) by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18ff), and to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) and we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

But is there a way to check up in our lives if we are loving God wholeheartedly as followers of Christ, as believers in Him?

III. Is there a way to check up as followers of Christ to see if we are loving God with our whole heart? (Mark 4:1-20).

I refer you back to Mark 4 in Jesus' teaching regarding the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soil.

A parable is just a figure of speech used to teach a moral or spiritual truth that is illustrated by an analogy drawn from every day life. It is a truth in picture form. It is used to teach a single truth. Some parables like those in Mark 4 are also given an interpretation.

Christ's teaching breaks down this way. (Sower is Jesus. The seed is the word of God, the gospel. The soil is the hearts of men, women, youth, and children.)

1. Seed sown by the wayside (Mark 4:3-4; 14-15).

As Jesus explains in Mark 4:14-15, the seed sown is the Word – the word of God, which would be the gospel of our Lord.

The seed did not even get into the ground because it was so hard. The birds came and ate the seed that was lying on the ground. When the people hear the gospel, the birds, Satan comes and takes away the seed which they have heard. Many followed Christ but did not accept His message at all. People today know about Christ but that is as far as their understanding goes. Minds are blinded by the evil one lest they accept the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

This had been called the "superficial heart" or the "hard heart."

2. Seed sown on rocky ground (Mark 4:5-6; 16-17).

The rocky soil may have been limestone rock. The seed would germinate quickly but to due to insufficient depth of the soil, the roots would soon meet the rock, shrivel up, and die.

Note that it says the hearers joyfully received the word of God, the gospel. When tough times come, they fall away. The word of God had not taken root in their lives.

This has been called the "shallow heart."

3. Seed sown on thorny ground (Mark 4:7; 18-19).

The gospel fell into thorny ground. The seed grew but was choked off by the thorns that grew up. These heard the gospel and seemed to accept it, but when the worries of the world came in, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things, they became unfruitful.

It seems here that these individuals had made an acceptance of Jesus Christ, the seed of the gospel had begun to bear fruit in their lives but it was soon stopped by the worries of life, love of money, and selfish desires. They fell into the trap of loving the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They did not follow I John 2:15-17. They started loving the world and its many attractions. resulting in not doing God's will.

This has been called the "crowded heart."

4. Seed sown on fertile ground (Mark 4:8, 20).

Some seed, the gospel, fell on good soil. The seed germinated, its roots grew deep in the good soil, and there was a good crop. Some of the seed produced, thirtyfold (good), other seed, sixtyfold (excellent) and some seed produced a hundredfold (amazing).

This is how the gospel works in the lives of those who let the gospel take root in their lives. God rewards faithfulness, and the Spirit of God brings the fruit in the believer's life to the glory of God.

Certainly, the first hard heart and shallow heart did not become believers in Jesus Christ. The crowded heart did become a believer but his or her life lost its effectiveness. No outward evidence that the individual was a believer in Jesus.

The fourth heart, the fruitful heart, is a believer who not only knows the Lord personally, but the fruit of the Lord is evident in his or her life.

***First of all the fruitful heart spends time each day having a devotional time with His Lord in Bible reading/study and prayer in order to develop His love for His Lord (II Timothy 2:15; John 15:7; I John 5:14-15).**

***The fruitful heart will give evidence of the fruit of the Spirit: love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (the character of Jesus Christ) –Galatians 5:22-23).**

***In the family relationship it will be evident that individuals are seeking to live in harmony and peace, where each member serves the other (Ephesians 5:18ff).**

***The fruitful heart looks forward to and enjoys worshipping with other believers at the local church giving to the Lord's work, and serving Him (Hebrews 10:24-25; II Corinthians 9:7).**

***The fruitful heart seeks to reach out to those in need (I John 3:16-18).**

***The fruitful heart prays for those needing Christ's love and seeks to be a witness for the Lord when the opportunities come along (Acts 1:8).**

***The fruitful heart has a biblical perspective on the world happenings (Ephesians 1:10; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). Knowing Christ could return any time causes the fruitful heart to keep looking for that return while living pleasing for His Lord (Titus 2:11-13).**

This leads to another question.

IV. What kind of a heart do I have as a follower of Jesus Christ?

1. Is my heart hard toward the Lord and His Word, His gospel?

2. Is my heart shallow in regard to Christ and His Word?

3. Is my heart crowded in my relationship with the Lord and His Word?

4. Is my heart a fruitful heart, where I am seeking to love the Lord with my whole heart?

We know we will sin at times, but we are quick to ask the Lord's forgiveness and go on in our relationship with Him.

But there is one final question we must ask.

V. How can we as believers keep from floating in to a hard, shallow or crowded heart?

I believer Mary's life from Mark 14:1-11 provides the answer.

Mary anointed Jesus head with an expensive perfume, worth almost a year's wages in that day. The response from some was that it was a waste, and the money given to the poor. But Jesus said that she has anointed my body beforehand for the burial. John tells us that she also anointed Jesus feet.

What a statement is that. Did Mary know that Jesus was about to die? Luke gives us this insight that Mary in their home at Bethany was seated at the feet of Jesus listening to His word.

Could it be that, because she sat at the feet of Jesus, she listened and the words of Christ found root in her life, and she knew that Jesus would die and she anointed Him for His burial. No one else had that privilege. She was willing to use what she had to show her love for her Lord. It was not a waste. It was that which showed her love for her Lord and her willingness to worship and serve Him regardless of the cost.

But the key here, is that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus learning from Him and of Him and His work.

Mary demonstrated a fruitful heart because she took time to sit literally at the feet of Jesus.

We don't have Jesus' feet to sit at today. But we do have His Word, and we can fellowship with Him through His Word and in prayer. As we daily do that our hearts are kept tender toward Him with the passion to love Him wholeheartedly that issues forth in loving our neighbors -- those individually that we know, those in our family, those in our church family, and those needing to experience Christ's love through believing the gospel.

May we display Christ's genuine heart in our lives this week as we live in the power of the Holy Spirit.