

Becoming human- giving glory. 22 July_2018.

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 29 Sunday 22 July_2018.

Background text READ Hebrews 4: 6 – 16 esp 12, 13. **Discerning the human heart.**

This year we are exploring what it means to be truly, fully human. Also, I believe that as we seek individually and together in community to be more human we will bring greater glory to God by the way we live our lives in relationship to others and with God.

(PP2) Last 3 weeks we have been considering the HUMAN HEART.... GTH looked at Ezekiel and spoke about stony hearts and open hearts. He spoke about not just the hearts of individuals but a whole nation – the Hebrews. Hardness of heart meant that they became arrogant and unable to hear God and so their practices became unjust and lacking in compassion. **Humans have hearts which can be open or closed to hear God or be deaf to God.** They can be stony or responsive.



How the term HEART is used in the Bible. The heart is not just the beating organ but the seat of our emotions, understanding, ethics, where we hope, plan and dream. HEART – the fulcrum of faith and feeling as well as the mainspring of words and actions. The heart is the seat of our desires. The word heart has come to stand in the Judeo-Christian understanding for humanity's entire mental and moral activity – both the rational and emotional elements. It is used figuratively for the "hidden springs of the personal life". (Vine's)

JESUS deals with the heart of the matter...

Jesus in describing the heart & mind of a people quotes Isaiah 6 in Matthew 13: 14, 15.

"This people will listen and listen but not understand. They will look and look but not see, because their minds are dull, they have stopped up their ears and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise their eyes would see, their ears would hear, their minds would understand, and they would turn to me, says God, and I would heal them." That's the Good News version but v15 in the Greek reads their "hearts that have become grossly waxed." (hardened)- so that they can't see with their eyes or hear with their ears and thus understand with their hearts.

We have already been considering - The image of God in humans – is NOT seen in a physical form likeness (as God is spirit) but in terms of knowledge and moral awareness and the possibility of relating in friendship to God.

Human beings... are able to reflect on and make judgements about our own and others' actions, and as a result we are able to make considered moral choices.

*Human beings have something that no other animal has: an ability to participate in a collective cognition. Because we, as individuals, are able to draw on the collective knowledge of humanity, in a way no animal can, our individual abilities go way beyond what evolution has endowed us with. Our species is no longer constrained by our biology. **Helene Guldberg Ph.D. Reclaiming Childhood***

We considered from 1 Samuel 16 the choice of a national leader/ a King –ruler chosen by God. When Samuel sees the impressive Eliab he says, “Surely this is the one the LORD has chosen?” BUT the LORD says to him:

V7 God sees differently from human perceptions. Our judgements can be skin deep – God goes deeper – to the very heart of a person.

We considered Jeremiah 17 we hear that we need God's insights and discernment to know and understand our own motives and motivations because

“The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17: 9)

ONLY GOD CAN know and only God can cure the ailing human heart. V10 “I, the LORD search human minds and test human hearts...”

Capacity for self-deception? We easily deceive ourselves – we can lie to ourselves about why we do what we do and respond as we respond. We need God's help so that we recognize distorted motives and weaknesses in ourselves. In seeking God's help to become more truthful to ourselves our stony hearts become more truly human and we become stronger as people. 1 John 1: 8 We deceive ourselves if we say we have no sin....

(PP4)The Bible places the site of human depravity (moral debasement) in the heart – or the very centre of our being. “Sin” – the fallenness that effects all our actions is in the core of our being – not just on the edges, in our actions but in our very nature. **It is our nature, our heart that needs to change if we are to please God and reach our full human potential.** *Matthew 15: 18,19, 20 JESUS: The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart...For from his heart come the evil ideas which lead him to kill, commit adultery and do other immoral things; to rob, to lie, and to slander others. These are the things which make a person unclean. But to eat without washing your hands as they say you should – that doesn't make a person unclean.*

What is the cure? Is there a healing? When I come to God – be sure, be confident that God knows my heart, God knows my thoughts. God is not deceived BUT essentially, I can assume that I am deceiving myself over many things. In that sense true prayer is a coming of light, a dawning of greater understanding of myself. In prayer I seek for my mind, my heart and my body all to be open to God at the same time. I need to encounter God's heart to see, hear and feel as God does.

God promises to change our hearts – if we cooperate with him. (Prayer for an undivided heart: *Psalms 86*). **Even though God knows our very heart he still loves us, seeks our heart and desires our love rather than our sacrifices. (Hosea 6:6).** We have in the human heart all the potential for a loving relationship with God. (PP5)

Hebrews 4: 12, 13. Metaphor for the Word of God – the Logos is a double edged sword. *Richard Rohr* talks about being *cut open in both directions*. In the same way OT sacrifices were split open like a pigeon being cut in 2 to expose all the internal organs. The Word of God is to do with the REVELATION of truth. In Revelation Jesus is depicted as having a two-edged sword coming from his mouth – Jesus is God’s Word spoken. (*1: 16 Jesus the first and last word – the Alpha and Omega*). God’s Word is alive and active – it is not a dead book. It tells the story of God’s people and the writer to the Hebrews is keen that we learn the lessons of history and do not harden our hearts like God’s people in the Exodus.

God’s concern will be deeper than just hearing our confessions about our external actions or lack of action. God looks at the heart and God will speak to us and show us about the heart of the matter. We perhaps try to tweak our actions – to be kinder, more neighbourly, less reactionary but God wants to do a deeper work of change in us.

Hearing the living Word – hearing Jesus’ speak. (Jesus revealed in Scripture and we hear God through the inner residency of the Holy Spirit). The writer to the Hebrews says we are in danger of repeating history – being hard hearted to God. God’s Word – the eternal Logos when we encounter the Logos – Jesus we experience revelation and we can be pierced by the revelation as a sword pierces flesh. (*Hebrews 1: 1,2 God has spoken in many ways but now definitively in Jesus*)

The Word of God needs to enter into every part of our experience – it is pictured here as both dividing and separating. Here it is God’s Word – not just human reason (Philo) that makes the judgement – that discerns between even our soul and spirit. (*)

The Word is living because it is God active (not an unused set of books on a shelf). God is the source of all life. Revelation of God is living – not dead like words on stone. As Jeremiah quoted in *Hebrews 10: 15, 16* the Law of God can be written on our hearts. Jesus said in *John 6: 63 – my words are spirit and life*. The Word is active and pursues us with challenges and also enables us to challenge evil (*take up a double-edged sword Ephesians 6: 17*).

God’s Word is penetrating and not superficial – it can penetrate the whole person. It is able to separate the true and false self. (*) Pneuma speaks of the spiritual aspect of a person and psyche or soul refers to human life irrespective of spiritual experience. Even in Scripture these terms appear as closely woven together but the Word of God is able to discern and reveal the true nature of a human’s motives and motivations and judge how genuine and authentic the person’s choices are.

Read v13. Every creature is to be open – literally “naked” (gymna) before God. This is what is needed in prayer and “examination” before God – not just in the future but in the now. God does not look at our swanky or fashionable clothing he looks deep into our hearts. We cannot hide from God although there are times we want to avert our eyes or turn our face to the wall. God wants us to look into his eyes – face to face. The word that is used here describes our heads being held and our neck bent back to expose our

eyes to God's gaze (and throat as if for slaughter: tetrachelismena). God wants us to be able to look into his eyes – and see the love he has for us.

Read vv 14 – 16 and be reassured that we have Jesus the Great High Priest as mediator to present us to the Father. We therefore can have confidence *to approach the throne and find GRACE to help in every time of need*. Our Jesus has total empathy for he has lived as human and mediates for us. JESUS is God's revelation to us – he is with us in God's full presence.

How can we come into the Presence? Jesus through the working of the Spirit takes us into the Presence of Godhead . (Example of using the Examen on Facebook post). Entering into a greater truth about God's love for me and also my true nature and the grace I need to ask for to change.

I can also learn other truths about prayer as they are modelled by God's people.

I need to give myself time with God in relationship - listening and being silent too.

Ongoing revelation can be the route for change. Pray for the willingness, the openness of my heart to change, to fall in love with God and grow in my desire to please God.

Pray for the Logos Word of God to be at work deeply in my heart and life – as I pray for the Logos Word to be deeply at work in you.