

“THE RIGHT HEART”

Pastor Mike Corwin

Text: Luke 7:11-17 God’s Word: John 1:6-18

I - TINMAN:

We started our story two weeks ago as Dorothy flew a house to the Land of Oz and dropped it on the evil Wicked Witch of the East. She met a good witch named Glenda as well as the people of Oz called Munchkins. We talked about how she then met the Wicked Witch of the West, the sister to the one Dorothy dropped a house on and we talked about how she was evil because she had never been exposed to the light.

Then we looked at Dorothy beginning her trip towards the Emerald City along the yellow brick road. The first person she met there was a brainless scarecrow. We talked about how God's wisdom is far superior to human knowledge. We talked about how God's ways and Words serve the purpose of calling humanity into his grace, calling us to Salvation. About how that Salvation came through Jesus, who is the light of the world - the light that can never be extinguished.

As she and the scarecrow started back on their journey, they next meet a man made of tin. Some aluminum foil, a metal funnel, and an axe make him the man he is. The trouble is he isn't complete either. He's missing a heart. Seems to have a brain and everything else, but he doesn't have a heart beating in his chest. And then he breaks into a song about how he needs that heart. As I listened to the song I noted that it insinuated the same thing over and over again. That without a heart he could not feel. He couldn't understand beauty like art...he couldn't be human...he couldn't commune with nature...and he couldn't love. Without a heart he has no feelings...no emotions...no passion. He's an empty tin can!

II - HEARTLESS:

The sad part of this week's message is that we still have many tin men among us! How heartless do you have to be to walk into a pool party and start shooting a gun, killing a mother of three in San Diego for no reason? How heartless do you have to be to run scams on elderly people who have limited funds and clean them out of their life savings? How heartless do you have to be to shake a baby so violently that it dies of brain injuries? How heartless do you have to be to kidnap a college student and rape and murder her? How heartless do you have to be to cut programs that feed the hungry and care for the homeless so that you can pay for other pet projects? How heartless do you have to be to bully those who are unlike you? How heartless do you have to be to discard people who have a different skin color than yours...different bank

account than yours...different life style than yours? They are not only heartless but they have no compassion, no empathy, and no feelings for anyone but themselves.

As I go about doing the work of the church there are times I deal with people who show this heartlessness. As I travel around and talk to people reference the drug problem in this community:

- I have been told by city employees that they would fight me if I tried to open a house for them to get better in.
- I have been told by a city employee that those people are "dirty" and we ought to just put them on a bus to Marion.
- That we should just let them die.
- That they deserve what they get.

And the same sentiments have been expressed over not only the drug issue, but also over poverty, homelessness, joblessness, medical care, and the list can go on and on. It exists!

Their heartlessness renders them to a place of social darkness, to a place of human darkness. The trouble is it renders the victims there too.

III - WE NEED A HEART:

We have set the church in motion to attack the areas of darkness in our community. We have said that we will dispel the darkness of:

- Drugs and Addiction
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Child care for 2nd and 3rd shifts
- Job training / obtaining / retaining

To do this we need to have a heart. Those in need have an endless supply of frowning bureaucrats who will look down their noses at them and pass judgment on them. What they need is someone with a heart!

We have to match the heart to the mission. When people get a heart transplant, there is a lot of work that goes into making sure it is a match between the donor and the recipient. You have to check blood type and other such things to make sure the heart will work and that it will not be rejected. If we are to do the work of spreading the light of Jesus to the darkness that enslaves the people, then we have to have a heart that matches the work. The heart we need is God's! We need to have God's heart beating within us.

I see this heart in the rest of the Gospel of John's Christmas narrative that you heard read earlier. God sent the true light into the world on that first Christmas. It was the continuation of the plan

he had made at the very beginning of time. That as the darkness increased in the broken world he would send the light to overcome it. He would send a light so powerful that it could never be put out. Even a cross and death did not extinguish it but made it shine even brighter and with more intensity than before. To all those who believe, all those who come to the light, they get a new life, a new heart. They get Salvation through the abundant and unfailing love of God. It is the heart of God, freely giving this unfailing love through proclaiming the light of Jesus that we need to do the work we are called to do.

So what does this heart look like? How can we learn about this heart so we can place it in our lives and the lives of others? What diagram do we have to see what the heart of God looks like and acts like? The answer is in verse 18...

¹⁸No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

We see God's heart and the love it contains by watching Jesus and living by his example. If we see Jesus' heart we see God's.

IV - TEXT:

I can find pictures and insight into this light...into this heart throughout the Gospels. Let me share just one small glimpse with you this morning.

Luke 7:11-17 (NLT)

¹¹Soon afterward Jesus went with his disciples to the village of Nain, and a large crowd followed him. ¹²A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow's only son, and a large crowd from the village was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. "Don't cry!" he said. ¹⁴Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. "Young man," he said, "I tell you, get up." ¹⁵Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother. ¹⁶Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God, saying, "A mighty prophet has risen among us," and "God has visited his people today." ¹⁷And the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding countryside.

In this passage we see that Jesus is doing the ultimate kind of miracle. One that certainly shows him to be the Messiah people have said he is. He raises someone from the dead.

As usual he is traveling about preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of God. He is just a few miles from Nazareth with the usual large crowd of people following him. As he nears the village of Nain there is a funeral procession coming out of the city and heading for the burial site which would have been on the outskirts of town. As he nears the procession he notes it is a young man who is dead and his mother is walking behind the coffin weeping. He also knows

that this was her only son and his loss means she will have no man in her household which, in that society, means she would be unable to earn a living and would be destitute.

Everyone else sees a funeral but Jesus sees a human being overcome with pain, sorrow, and grief and it says, "*His heart overflowed with compassion.*" He tells her not to cry and then he removes the cause of her tears. He spoke to the dead boy and told him to get up, which he did, and it says, "*Jesus gave him back to his mother.*" The boy was Jesus', was God's in the afterlife, but Jesus was so overcome with love for this woman that he gave the boy back to his earthly mother.

This is the heart of God at work. Jesus didn't just feel sorry for the woman. Jesus didn't look at the funeral procession as a minor inconvenience in his way. Jesus had no duty to stop and as far as we know didn't even know this boy or his mother. But his heart broke with compassion and he touched their lives in a way that made them whole again.

This is the heart we are to have. This is the heart we must have to overcome the darkness of people's lives. We must not look at it as an inconvenience. We must not do it just because we're tired of hearing the preacher proclaim the need for it. We must not do it out of a sense of obligation. We do it because when we find the love of God Through Jesus in our own lives we have his heart beating in our bodies...his heart directing our souls...and we too are overcome with compassion and the need to help make people's lives right...to make them whole again.

And when we do it right, we don't get praised, our church doesn't get praised, but God gets praised. People come to know that Jesus is the Messiah and God still visits his people today!

V - THE RIGHT HEART:

So...my question for you today is "Do You Have The Right Heart?" Do you have God's heart beating in your chest or some heart shaped pocketwatch that beats, looks good, but serves only to give you life but no one else?

If you don't have the heart of God, I pray you will search for it. Through prayer, through study, through meditation, and through seeing others as God sees them may you find and empower the heart of God to direct your life and your work. May you find compassion for God's children.

And once you do, don't forget to use it so it doesn't get rusty.

Amen