

Troubled Hearts

Luke 8:22-25, John 14:1-6

I know all this talk about retirement can be a little unsettling. But we all have to admit, we're all getting older...and sometimes you have to look at the humor that is connected to the aging process. I came across these words of wisdom simply titled:

You know you're getting old when...You know you're getting old when: At the breakfast table you hear snap, crackle and pop and you're not eating cereal. You know you're getting old when you try to straighten out the wrinkles in your socks and discover you aren't wearing any. You know you're getting old when you wake up looking like your driver's license picture. You know you're getting old when you say something to your kids that your mother said to you, and you always hated it. You know you're getting old when your address book has mostly names that start with Dr. You know you're getting old when it takes twice as long to look half as good. Lastly you know you're getting old when you wonder how you could be over the hill when you don't ever remember being on top of it.

Such is the challenge of getting older...but one that we all face in this journey of life.

On a much more serious note, the older one gets puts a person in a more susceptible place for physical health concerns. One of those concerns has to do with the heart. There may be no apparent signs of heart trouble, maybe just a little shortness of breath, maybe feeling a little more tired than usual, but suddenly it hits, this strong vice-like grip upon the chest, pain radiates through the arm, and the person is having trouble breathing. What I'm describing is a person having a heart attack.

There are some of you who have gone through such a frightening scenario. It can be an experience of great alarm and panic...emergency attention is required. Without it the consequences can be fatal.

But this morning I want to talk about another kind of heart trouble that often afflicts us in life. And it also requires special attention. And rather than going to the doctor's office, it requires the care of the Great Physician. You hear Jesus words about heart trouble in today's passage from John 14. It is a passage we often read at funeral services. Jesus preparing his disciples for his own suffering and death. They had seen

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the mounting opposition of the religious leaders and the authorities and there must have been a lot of anxiety and unrest in their souls. And Jesus sensing their concerns brings them a word of hope and promise.

We too can feel like those early disciples. We too allow our hearts to be troubled. It is the world we live in and it can cause us a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety and unrest. And we may have a hard time getting a handle on life and its problems. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by it all. We get so anxious. Psychologists talk about anxiety disorder; an anxiety that persists to the point that it interferes with your life. Some would say it is one of the most common mental health issues. And whether we suffer from the disorder or not, we all feel the pressures of life and the stresses of life that impact us deeply. So we all have to do some personal analysis of our condition. You might call it a personal heart check-up. Here's the question: what is causing a troubled heart in you. It might be financial pressures...as you try to keep up with the bills that pile up. Maybe it connected to your job...not sure how long you will be able to keep it, or handle the stresses of your daily work. Or maybe that heart trouble is being caused because of relationship issues. Maybe someone has hurt you or been critical of you....or you feel the pain and hurt of a broken relationship, Or maybe it the anxiety that is caused by the world we live in ...the threat of terrorism, the tension between nations, the prevalence of violence and hatred.

There are so many things that can cause a troubled heart. And we're not talking about things that affect somebody else, these are the conditions that describe you and me. We can allow your hearts to be troubled. We let the concerns and difficulties of our lives create worry and anxiety. Things get too much for us, they get the best of us, we get upset, frustrated, discouraged and even depressed.

I guess you would call them the storms of life...storms that we all face, sometimes they don't come with lots of warning. Not like the recent hurricanes where warnings were issued days ahead of time. Sometimes they just hit us...like the storm that came up on the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. An area that is susceptible to sudden storms. And the disciples who were used to being out on the water appear afraid and feel they are in great danger. They turn to Jesus who is sleeping on the boat. "Master, Master, we are perishing" This is no small storm, they feared for their very lives. And Jesus rebukes the wind and the raging waves, and then there was calm. The fear that had filled their hearts was replaced with peace and calm.

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There is something powerful about the presence of Jesus that brings peace in the midst of the storm. And Jesus is about to face the fiercest storm of his life as he prepares to go to the cross. As he prepares to carry out this divine mission, he brings a word of assurance to his disciples. He brings a word of hope and encouragement that is also for you and me this morning.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled, Believe in God, believe also in me.” It almost sounds too simple, yet it is the getting hold of that message that makes all the difference for living in this world. Because it is the presence of Jesus that becomes our provision for peace in a troubled world. Think about it. Jesus knows your heart condition.. And it is his very presence that can make a change in us...in how we approach life, in how we handle life’s challenges and stresses. With all the problems and struggles we face on an everyday basis,,I need to get hold of the truth that Jesus is the way to an untroubled heart.

I often think of this passage in John 14 as a road of preparation. That Jesus is telling us as his disciples...I am taking this road for you. I am going ahead of you. I am going to accomplish the mission God has given me. It will not be an easy road. It is a road of suffering and anguish. It is a road that leads to a cross. But it is also a road that leads to life, eternal life, abundant life. So trust in me and find the peace of following me on this road.

I don’t think the disciples of Jesus fully understood this...and it led to a question by Thomas that we also must ask of the Lord. Lord, we don’t know the way where you are going. How can we know the way? How many of us are ready to ask Jesus that question? How many of us are going through some personal trial or struggle and Jesus hears our cry: How can we know the way?

Almost everyday Pastor HeyYoung and I encounter persons who are searching for the answer to that question. Someone lying in a hospital bed, maybe dealing with the news that he or she has cancer. Or someone realizes that his relationship with his spouse has come to an end and is contemplating divorce. Or a parent trying to handle a child who has gotten into trouble. Troubled hearts, each of us could make our own list.

And the word Jesus speaks to Thomas, he speaks to you and me: I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. Jesus, Master, Savior, Teacher, Healer, Comforter, touches the troubled heart. Jesus, who does the

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heart exam, Jesus who performs the by-pass surgery, so that we can cope with life's pressures and know the joy and peace he brings.

This morning I invite you to look to the healer of troubled hearts. One who knows about the blockages of the spiritual heart. Why do we hold back, why do we even try to run away from our troubles or just hope our problems will disappear.

I read the story of a man who was about to be married, but got cold feet and decided to avoid the marriage by performing several burglaries on the day of the wedding and leaving all kinds of evidence so to be sure he would be caught. Sure enough, the soon-to-be groom was picked up by the police shortly before the wedding and was arrested. The judge hearing his story decided to set him free giving him the assurance that he didn't have to be "locked in" to marriage or in jail. I guess you could say that was taking drastic measures to avoid a problem.

But we do the same thing spiritually, we try to avoid our problems, and discover that we cannot find peace in our hearts. Jesus never said this road we travel in life would be easy but for the troubled heart, his promise is real: I am the way. For you and me this day: I am the way.. For the persons who feel they have lost their way: Jesus says: I am the way. For someone troubled in spirit, anxious about a decision, weighed down by a problem. Jesus says: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." "Don't let your heart be troubled" Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Max Lucado in his book Just Like Jesus asks us to think about this matter of the heart. He put it like this: "What if for 24 hours, Jesus wakes up in your bed, walks in your shoes, lives in your house, assumes your schedule? Your boss becomes his boss, your mother becomes his mother, your pains his pains? With one exception, nothing changes. Your health doesn't change. Your circumstances don't change. Your schedule isn't altered. Your problems aren't solved. Only one change occurs. What if, for one day and night, Jesus lives your life with his heart? Your heart gets the day off, and your life is led by the heart of Christ. His priorities govern your actions. His passions drive your decisions. His love directs your behavior. What would you be like? Would people notice a change? Your family - would they see something new? Your coworkers - would they sense a difference? What about the less fortunate? Would you treat them the same? And your friends? Would they detect more joy? How about your enemies? Would they

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receive more mercy from Christ's heart than from yours?... (and) what alterations would this transplant have on your stress level? Your mood swings? Your temper? Would you sleep better? Would you see sunsets differently? Death differently? Taxes differently?... Would Jesus taking over your heart, would anything change?... God's plan for you is nothing short of a new heart."

Most of us remember the name of Dr. Christian Bernard. He was the cardiac surgeon who performed the first heart transplant. He tells the story of one of his transplant patients who asked to see the removed organ. So Dr. Bernard brought the man his heart in a large bottle. As the man looked at the big muscle which once pumped life through his body, the famed surgeon realized that this was the first time in human experience that a person had ever seen his own heart. It was truly an historic moment. But for the patient it was a very personal and moving experience. His old heart now worn out, if it had not been replaced would no longer be living. After a long pause, the man in gratitude simply said: "I'm glad I don't have that old heart anymore."

Well, what had been done for this man physically, God seeks to do for us spiritually. Give us a new heart, or a changed heart. An untroubled heart that is in the care of the Master surgeon.... May the prayer chorus we sang this morning truly be our prayer..."change my heart O God. Make it ever true, Change my heart O God, May I be like you. Christ living in us...giving us a changed heart.