

The Heart of the Savior

Sterling UMC
August 22, 2010
Luke 4:16-21

What if, for one day, Jesus were to become you?

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 become his pains? With one exception, nothing about your life 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 one 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 receive more mercy?

Does that scenario sound far fetched? Is that just some sort of mental fantasy? Hardly! God's plan for you is nothing short of a new heart. If you were a car, God would want to control your engine. If you were a computer, God would claim the software and the hard drive. If you were an airplane, he'd take his seat in the cockpit. But you are a person, so God wants to change your heart.

God wants you to be just like Jesus. He wants you to have a heart like his.

So what is the heart of the Savior? What was his passion? The core of who he was and what he came to accomplish. What drove him, energized him, motivated him, and guided him. What is the heart of the Savior?

I believe we get the clearest picture of the heart of the Savior from this profound passage from Luke 4.

Jesus had just returned from the wilderness and the Mount of Temptation where he had struggled with Satan and faced temptation and had not bowed to compromise. The Bible says that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.

Here we find Jesus in the synagogue. He is handed the scroll containing the words of the prophet Isaiah. And he begins to read the text. When he is finished, he rolls the scroll back up and says, "This scripture is now literally fulfilled."

I believe that captures the heart of the Savior. They tell us who he is and what he came to accomplish. And what I believe is in the deepest place of God's heart is an intense, burning, passionate love for people. All people. Everywhere. Deep in the heart of God is a passionate love for people.

Here in this passage Jesus gives us a glimpse of his heart.

His heart was first of all to proclaim the good news of the gospel to the poor.

Simply put, Jesus came to proclaim the Good News of Grace to the Impoverished. It would not matter if they were poor physically or poor spiritually. He would go to them and not the wealthy and prestigious.

It was the day after the first Easter and two men were taking a journey from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. These two men were poor - spiritually bankrupt, they needed to hear the Good News and that is where Jesus went to work.

Take another look at these two men. They had come to the Jerusalem for the Great Feast, the Feast of the Passover. They had expected to be joyful with the Holy City filled with faithful followers in Holy Celebration, but instead they found sorrow.

He was a great teacher, a miracle worker, an inspirer of men. He had touched their hearts with a gentle grace. He had stirred their spirits with a powerful message. He had changed their lives in so many ways, that they had become followers, believers, dreamers, until that Friday.

This great prophet, they had watched as He was nailed to a cross, stood with the others as He struggled for life, and at the end, beheld His death. And with His death went their hopes, their dreams, their new faith and their renewed spirit.

So, they left Jerusalem two days later, broken and bankrupt in spirit. They had believed that He was the One that life would be changed for the better, but now He was dead and His body was missing. They were miserable, hopeless and poor in spirit.

How many times do we find ourselves walking in their shoes? When all our dreams go up in smoke, when God seems too far away, when it seems our only option is to go back to what we know, to what is common, to what is comfortable. When that happens, we then walk the path they walked.

Yet, while they were trudging along that seven-mile long path, Jesus appeared and began to walk with them. He showed interest in their sorrow, so they opened their hearts to Him. They told Him of how they had believed, hoped and dreamed with a prophet from Nazareth. They spoke of how he had touched their hearts and changed their lives, but it was all over. He was dead and gone.

This is when Jesus touched them again and this time with an even greater message than before. He opened their hearts to the Scriptures that told of His coming and His mission. He made their hearts ring again with excitement and the spirits soar with grace. And, that is when they saw Him.

He was alive, resurrected from the grave. That was the Good News, that was the Gospel, and when they heard it and saw it they rejoiced! And, immediately left to tell all the others who had also lost their hope, that there was Good News and a reason to rejoice again.

Jesus will do no less for you today. He will meet you where you are. He will bring His message again, rekindle your spirit, renew your faith and send you on your way rejoicing.

Would you allow Jesus to meet you with the Good News? Bring Him your sorrow, your broken spirit, your shattered dreams and allow Him, the crucified and risen Son of God to renew your faith and recreate your spirit by His message of love and sacrifice.

Secondly, Jesus' heart is to proclaim freedom for the prisoner.

His mission was to bring freedom to those in bondage. Whether it was a physical imprisonment or a spiritual imprisonment, for the sinner or the saint, He would set them free.

In John 8, Jesus met a woman who found herself in the worst situation imagined. She had been caught in the very act of adultery and had now been brought before Jesus.

There are times in every one of our lives where we are caught, imprisoned by sin and guilt in one way or another. Whether it be by our own sins, the sins of another or a combination of the two. And when that happens we become subject to the mercy of another.

This is the situation this adulterous woman found herself in. That is when Jesus steps in and does the unexpected. He challenges her accusers with their own consciences. "Anyone without sin of their own can throw the first stone." I told you there was enough guilt to go around, and the ones who laid the trap have just come face-to-face with theirs.

The stones that had been hoisted in anger are dropped by personal shame. The mouths that pronounced her guilt and clamped shut by their guilt. The feet that had pompously marched to Jesus at the Temple, now shuffle and drag their way back into the streets in humiliation.

Her accusers are gone, and she cannot believe her eyes nor her ears. But the story nor the scene is not over. Jesus grants her the two things she knew she would never hear nor see again - Forgiveness and Freedom. He said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more."

Jesus can, and will, grant you those two very same things. And you know you need them. Maybe you are tied down by some sin in your life. It hinders you every way you turn, it haunts you every day, it suppresses all you could be in the Lord. Maybe you are oppressed by legalism, the evil schemes of men or the sinful ways of society. There is Forgiveness and Freedom to be found in the heart of the Savior.

Jesus is waiting to set you free. He is pleading with you to seek and accept His forgiveness. Oppressed, repressed, tied down and held captive by sin Jesus offers you deliverance for your soul.

Thirdly Jesus' heart is to bring recovery of sight to the blind.

Our Lord had the gift of restoring sight to the blind, and not just those who were blind of sight, but also those who were blind of heart. In Luke 18 Jesus encounters a young man who was truly blinded by his life.

At first glance this guy seems to have everything going his way. He is wealthy - no worries financially. He is young - life is still full of vigor. He is in a position of authority - a mover and a shaker. What else could a man want?

Even in religious matters he was on the straight and narrow. But something was missing.

Boy, oh, boy, that sounds all too familiar doesn't it? How many times do we go to God with our little list of good deeds and our program of obedience looking for His seal of approval? We have all the right answers, all the right connections, the right position in society and belong to the right circle in religious matters. But in reality, we like him, lack one vital piece of the big picture.

You remember what Jesus told him, "Sell all your possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, then take up your cross and follow me."

The Rich Young Ruler couldn't believe his ears, and his heart could not bear the weight of the answer. His riches, authority and youth had blinded him to the spiritual intent of God for life. He could not see past his accomplishments to obey God. He couldn't let go of all he was in the world to become all that he could be in God. So he went away disappointed.

How many of you are in the same position as he was? Everything is running smooth in your life. You are comfortable financially, accepted socially, good religiously and you think you are set. Jesus says you are not complete. He says when we focus on those things we are spiritually blind. You have yet to take the final steps - surrender, sacrifice and service.

Would you allow Jesus to open your eyes to the life you must live? Don't count your wealth, health and popularity as tickets to heaven. Don't even seek to bargain with Jesus based on your religious piety. Seek His ways and His ways are Surrender, Sacrifice and Service.

Finally the heart of Jesus was to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

In John 4 Jesus meets the woman at the well. The time was right for the woman at the well to come back to her God, and Jesus would give her the opportunity of a lifetime.

There are many ways a person's life can become complicated. And it seems that once the pathway becomes difficult a snowball effect is created. The woman at the well had a very complicated life.

She was a Samaritan. A mix of Jew and Gentile, a half-breed which neither the Jews or the Gentiles claimed. She was an outcast from both societies, caught in between the two with no sympathy from either one.

She was also in a highly questionable marital situation. Jesus tells her that she had had 5 husbands, and to top that off she was living with a man to whom she was not married. Morally her life was in a mess, in shambles and you know it had to affect her daily life in many, many ways.

She had more serious complications and problems in her life than anyone else listed in Scripture. Seems as though everything was going against her. She received no breaks, no good fortune, nothing in life by trouble.

Not much has changed in 2000 years has it? Human life is still full of complications, problems and trouble. And the more complications we have it seems that more come, until we reach the point of throwing up our hands in defeat and hopelessness.

Yet in the face of all of this Jesus steps in and offers hope. That is exactly what he did with the woman at the well. She did not begin her day expecting to meet anyone at the well, let alone the Messiah. But, by the end of her encounter with Jesus she was glad that the unexpected had happened.

Jesus spoke to her. Unexpected, yes. Frightening, more than likely. Shocking, most certainly. Jews had no dealings with Samaritans and this one was asking her for a drink of water. But it is what happens next that really catches her off guard.

Jesus offers her living water. This is symbolic of salvation. Here she is a half-breed, 5 time divorcee who is shacking up with some guy and Jesus tells her to ask and she shall be saved. Talk about unexpected. But that is not all Jesus says.

He goes on to tell her that "now is the time to draw near to God in spirit and truth because I am here. I am the Messiah." We are not told exactly how the woman responded but I can't help believe that her life was forever changed.

And that can also happen with you today. I don't know where you are today either but this one thing I do know, Salvation is just a step away. Today is the day to take that step. Allow Jesus to come into your life by submitting to His will and obeying

the Gospel. Don't walk away. Don't leave Jesus waiting. Don't miss another opportunity to set things right in your life.

My friends he stands before you this morning and he wants to change your heart. He wants to give you a new heart. He wants your heart to be just like his.

Jesus stood in the temple that day long ago and shared his heart; a heart for those who are poor, a heart for the one who is imprisoned by sin and guilt, a heart for those who are blinded by their own attitudes and desires, a heart to bring salvation and new life to those who are lost. And he said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."