

Thy Very Heart: My Heart Healed by His

~Matthew 11~

Week two of series, “A Gentle and Lowly Heart,” February 7, 2021,
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--The purpose of this series--

We are putting our tired, cold, and weary hearts before God’s great heart, asking God for healing and renewal. Recall the image of Jesus placing his hand on your heart and asking you how you’re doing before placing your hand on his heart and saying, “Because this is how I feel.”

Remember that our faith is far more than a set of ideas. It has an **affective center** where our hearts come in contact with God’s glorious heart.

Our approach for the rest of the series will be to put our hearts before the flowing stream of truth and love coming from God’s heart by turning to **Scripture**. Then we plead and **pray** that the **Spirit** would supernaturally make the truths we encounter take root inside of us.

--What we saw last week in Ezekiel 36--

In **Ezek. 36:26-27**, we saw that the human heart is wicked, weary, and like stone. God said he would replace our hearts and put his Spirit in us.

The imagery of the heart transplant in Ezekiel is explained by Paul in **Rom. 5:5**. Here we see again that God doesn’t just want to give us new hearts, but he also wants to share his heart with us. Thus he sends his Spirit into the hearts of his people.

God’s love for Paul is that which emanates from his heart, most clearly seen in Jesus. Thus, the truth of **God’s** love in **Jesus** is being poured into our hearts through the **Spirit**.

--Opening thoughts on Jesus’ description of his own heart--

There is *one* passage in the Bible in which Jesus talks specifically about his own heart with his own words: **Matt. 11:29**. In this passage, Jesus says people should trust him because his heart is gentle and lowly.

It's an amazing choice of words, and Jesus' only explicit self-description of his heart. Given such, Charles Spurgeon, when preaching on this passage, charged himself and his listeners to "weigh it with all the more care."

When we do, we might find it perplexing. It takes us to an unfamiliar realm of understanding. We often talk about what God has done (e.g., miracles, death, resurrection), but here we find Jesus describing *who he is* at the fundamental heart level.

Dane Ortlund puts it this way: When we ask about Jesus' heart, we also ask, "What is most natural to him? What ignites within him most immediately as he moves toward sinners?"

Jesus offers rest to anyone who is weary. But it would be a mistake to presume upon this call. The context of this passage shows there is a specific type of person that can receive Jesus' offer.

--Matt. 11:25: the hiddenness of God's heart--

11:25. *At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have **hidden these things** from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children."*

'These things' refers to the passions and plans deepest in the heart of God as realized through Jesus Christ.

Earlier in **Matt. 11**, John the Baptist sent a question to Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come?" (Matt. 11:3). This is the question that hangs over the entire chapter: *Who is Jesus?*

So, 'these things' refers to Jesus. And God's 'hiding' and 'revealing' means we cannot presume access to his heart (and invitation).

There is a modern conception in which God is a nebulous force of love with a wide open heart. That's not what this passage says, for *God hides his heart from some people*.

(a) God hides his heart from people who are **proud**.

The passage refers to the "wise and understanding." This does not mean people with a high IQ or who enjoy reading, but those who refuse to admit they need God.

(b) God shares his heart with people who are **humble**.

“Little children” refers to those who will become like a child in admitting their need for someone to help them.

Scripture resounds with the theme of God sharing himself with the humble but not the proud. (See Prov. 3:34; Jam. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5.)

--Matt. 11:27: the revealer of God's heart--

11:27. *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

Jesus make a similar claim in **John. 14:6**. At first blush, it feels offensive.

It feels offensive because we begin with a faulty premise that God's heart is open to anyone, and that we can tap into it without help.

But the Bible paints a different picture. Everyone exists in a fog, not knowing God, the meaning of life, etc. Then, through that fog comes one ray of light—the manifestation of Jesus. (See John. 1:18.)

We need only the slightest ounce of humility. Sometimes all we can pray is, “*God, I wish I wanted to need you more.*”

--Matt. 11:29: the surprise we see when we look inside--

11:29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am **gentle** and **lowly** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

--A. W. Tozer

What Tozer is really asking here is what is our **reflex** when we ask, ‘What does God think about me?’ Not our theology, but the reflex of our heart.

Many of us assume the worst: God is critical, disappointed, and disgusted; indifferent and distant; too high and holy to suffer us.

But Jesus taught us to come to him because he is **gentle** and **lowly**.

- (a) **Gentle**, also translated as meek. It refers to someone who is humble, not proud; mild, not harsh. It does not mean weak, nor passive or indifferent to evil. Far from it.

In Scripture, we see that Jesus has an array of affections, including righteous anger. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus denounced unrepentant cities emphatically (Matt. 11:20-24).

The term for gentle is used in other Greek literature to describe a tame horse. Picture a calm stallion—strength under control.

Recall that **all things** have been handed over to Jesus (v. 27), yet he is still gentle. His power emanates from a place of total security and radical love. Beneath the surface of Jesus' strength and majesty is, of all things, tenderness.

- (b) **Lowly**, which refers to social standing and physical appearance: poor, undesirable, and unimpressive.

Isaiah prophesied just this, that the coming messiah would have “no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa. 53:2).

Mary uses the word for lowly (translated as “humble estate”) in her *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55).

Jesus is lowly, so we can run to him.

We say, *But I have sinned greatly.* Jesus says, **I am kind.**
But I have sinned over and over. **I am patient.**
But I am so beaten down. **I am tender, not rough.**
I'm full of anger and coldness. **I am warm and at peace.**
But I'm a nobody. **Yes, and I'm lowly and unimpressive.**
I hate how my life has gone. **I'm not indifferent to your pain.**

Consider the Apostle Paul, adrift and cold at sea after yet another shipwreck, remembering the words of Jesus: “I will never leave you or forsake you; I am with you always; I am gentle and lowly.”

--Application--

In **Matt. 5:5**, Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Jesus wants us to have a tender, humble heart like his.

John Stott saw Martin Luther King, Jr. as an important modern example of what it looks like to have a heart under the gentle touch of the Lord. When his heart might have burned with anger, he responded, “Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you...”

Please Lord, let this little statement that you are gentle and lowly make its way from our minds to our hearts.

--When time allows--

[Here you can find Charles Spurgeon’s 1873 sermon, “The Heart of Christ,”](#) which Sam quoted from in his message. *Spurgeon.org* is a wonderfully organized collection of Spurgeon’s many sermons. That man loved God.

[Here is Dane Ortlund’s book, *Gentle and Lowly*.](#) It’s out of stock on Amazon and clearly very popular. Ortlund is a Presbyterian pastor and author of other books such as [this one on Jonathan Edwards](#).

AW Tozer’s well-known line comes from [his great, little book *The Knowledge of the Holy*](#). Each chapter focuses on an attribute of God. It is a concise, nourishing book that can be read in a day or two.

[Go here for a John Stott’s full exploration](#) of MLK’s remarkable meekness and gentleness.