

Matthew 6 (19-21) – Spending Your Heart Rightly

People talk about having a change of heart. Deciding to think differently about something. And people can have a change of heart about Jesus. Amen. But only God can change your heart from being dead in sin, to being alive in Jesus. And to truly be a Christian, to have a truly changed heart, requires a whole new heart, a new life, a new nature. And only God can give you a new heart, through what we call regeneration, or being born again.

This is how that happens. God causes you to be raised from the spiritually dead to be spiritually alive. You are given faith, by which you repent toward God and believe in Jesus Christ. And a great exchange takes place. Jesus takes the punishment for your sin, and gives you the benefit of his righteousness. Based on that, you are justified, in other words, declared righteous by God. You've been forgiven, saved by God's grace, and given a new nature, a new heart, with new desires. You're on your way to Heaven.

After you have been justified, declared righteous because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the war for your soul has been won. But the battle for your life has just begun. Who will you live your life for, yourself or your Savior? This is called sanctification, the ongoing process of being conformed to the character of Jesus. By grace, you have a new heart, one that is capable of obeying God, following God, desiring God and delighting in God. And now, through faith, you must endeavor to spend your heart in service to God and his will. Or you will yield to the temptations of sin and spend your heart on selfish pursuits and sinful passions.

And so, this is the battle, and its effects. You'll either be increasing your experience of joy and peace in God, and earning rewards in Heaven for eternity. Or you will look to be satisfied with things that aren't of God, that aren't earning rewards in Heaven, that leave you with a decreasing experience of God, and a declining obedience and delight in God. It all depends on what you're doing with your heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*"

So, here is the question. How do you get your heart to want the things you know Jesus wants you to want? The answer is investment. In our text today, Jesus says where your treasure is, that is where your heart is. He teaches you that if you want your heart to go after God, you should send your treasure God's way. Your heart follows your valuables. We are all interested in our investments. Jesus says that when you make an investment in God's kingdom, not only will it endure, it will change you in the process.

People talk about wanting God to change their heart. And Jesus is giving you a surefire way to make that happen. A way to guard your heart, and to guide your heart. He's talking about using the power of your resources, whether they be time, talent, or treasure, to advance God's kingdom in your heart. This doesn't mean that you do it to the total detriment of your loved ones or yourself. You should provide for your family, and take care of yourself when it comes to food, clothing, and shelter. Yes, you can save for retirement, and you should enjoy the abundance that God may give to you. 1 Timothy 6:17 says that God *richly provides us with everything to enjoy*.

But there is a limit to that. And a lesson to learn in that. Here is the whole of 1 Timothy 6:17, and then also vs.18-19. Listen: *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.* It reminds you of what Jesus was saying.

The lesson is this: you should not accumulate wealth with the singular goal of your own pleasure at the expense of advancing the kingdom of God. That is the problem for many people, rich or not. Pleasure is their treasure. Their heart is inclined to spend all their resources, and all their gains on themselves, and their pleasures, instead of investing it in God's kingdom.

What are you giving your heart to? God is the one who gave you a new heart. Don't be selfish with it. And don't make yourself your primary benefactor.

In vs.19, Jesus is saying that you must not be in the habit of hoarding wealth just to spend on yourself. Look at vs.25-34. Jesus says that you need to stop making your primary concern your money, food, clothing, and shelter. And you can rightly expand that to include not just your possessions, but your position, or whatever it may be that you think and worry about most. He says that instead, you should concern yourself with the kingdom of God. But he doesn't leave it at that, with a command to stop that and start this. He tells you how to get it done. And it's worth it.

So, how do you stop being so concerned with your stuff, and your self-interests, etc., and start being more concerned with God's kingdom? Jesus says that when you spend your treasure (all the types of your resources – time, talent, treasure) on God's kingdom, your eyes are inclined that way. And so, your heart goes too. Jesus is always worth it.

Here's how it works: you send your heart and God matures and shapes your heart. You spend your resources on the things related to his kingdom. And he changes how you see these things. He changes your heart. So, use your resources for the things of God. In that way, you will prove to yourself that your source is greater than yourself. You'll be less worried about your money. You'll be less self-absorbed, self-centered, and self-sufficient. This will work itself out in more than just the material area. This will help you when you feel overwhelmed in any area. You are not alone, and you are not your ultimate source. Your source is greater than yourself.

But you have to renew your mind around this truth. 2 Corinthians 4:5 – *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.* It is a twisted teaching and a wrong minded faith that turns Christianity into a selfish pursuit. You have to renew your mind. Martin Luther described the human condition as “curved inward on oneself”. Rather than living a life aligned toward God and others, human sinfulness directs your life inward, toward self-preoccupation, self-satisfaction, and self-promotion. And even when you've been given a new heart, you still have to battle with your old ways.

The solution for Christians is to learn the stewardship of serving others. You shouldn't treat life like it is a zero-sum game where there is only so much stuff to go around. Yes, you should be a good steward with your resources. But you shouldn't hoard things for yourself. The Bible teaches that when you hoard something that's when you lose it. When Christians store up treasures for themselves God puts holes in their pockets. Use what you have been given for God's glory by spending it on others. Jesus is always worth it.

Now there are plenty of people who do serve others in certain ways at certain times. And that is good. But a changed heart is about more than just serving others. It is serving others at the expense of yourself. That is what the Bible teaches. That's what Jesus calls you to. When your focus is to save things just for yourself you spoil them. When you save money in that way, it turns into materialism, greed, and covetousness.

It's this way in all of your life. When you save your energy just for yourself, it turns into excess, frivolous pursuits, and eventually exhaustion, and laziness. When you save your time, instead of spending it in service to others, it turns into envy, and jealousy, and worry that you won't have enough. When you save knowledge, instead of gifting it to others, it turns into pride. But when you spend your heart rightly, it gets replenished. It is a beautiful thing. It's God's design. If you don't want to be a person who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing, then you must learn to serve God by sacrificially serving people with your gifts.

People get stuck in a crisis, or they see a loved one who desperately needs help, and they want God to do something, but when he does it in a way that makes them count the cost, they are unwilling to pay it. It might cost you something personally for God to move in someone else's life. And you might not get to sacrifice the things you are already ready to lose. It might be that God takes away something you want to give something they need. Jesus makes you more like him by having you sacrifice some time, some money, and some comfort. He is always worth it. And let me tell you something: Someone needs and is waiting on your submissive, sacrificial obedience.

We say we want someone to be set free, but all we really want is for them to settle down and be quiet, not to disturb our peaceful life. We don't want to help if it is going to cost us something. But revival, deliverance, repentance and restoration are going to cost you something, and an empty altar receives no fire. But when you send God your heart, he molds your heart.

I'm telling you, this whole "changed heart" is not just Jesus trying to get you to live like a poor person, and it isn't just me trying to get you to give the church more money. This is about a mindset that changes the nature of your obedience. You can go from having your life to be all push, push, push to it being pulled like gravity in the right direction. Yes, it's true.

The Christian life is meant to be like a sailboat, with a wind in your sails that allows you to invite others to come onboard. But for too many of us it is more like a rowboat, where you are doing all the rowing and you hate it for others to rely on you because everyone else seems to be just coasting in your boat and telling you that you aren't doing enough. The difference is tremendous.

Friends, love means that you are called to serve, but it isn't a license to demand that others serve you. And it is no wonder that life is so taxing to those who only want to be served. Their service just wears them out and their heart is not replenished. But learning to sail with Jesus is worth it.

Now this might seem like it can't be real, so let's talk about motivation. When it comes to obedience, you know that you should be "doing this" or "not doing that". And you try and make yourself behave. But it doesn't last. Now you're a saved person. You believe the Bible. And you want to believe that it's a blessing to live as God wants you to, not a burden. Intellectually you understand it, but in your heart, you don't always believe it. You feel as if you have to give up what you want, what you like, or what has helped you cope with life. You have a hard time making yourself do things a new way.

And there is the issue. You just try to make yourself do it. So, you wear yourself out trying to do it. And you're just miserable all the time, and

jealous of those who seem to “have it easy”. Or you slack off even trying to do it. You live a life of spiritual laziness and license. You think, “It doesn’t really matter what I do, as long as it isn’t too bad. I trust Jesus, and I know he forgives me, and if he wanted me to be different, I would be.” You’re just coasting along and calling it grace. That’s not faith, that’s foolishness.

Now, you can’t continue to make yourself do what you hate doing for very long. No matter how much you tell yourself that you ought to do this or stop that, and no matter how much you read about what God wants. So, you know that you need God’s help. And you pray and pray for God to help you want to do things right. But you never quite feel like you really want to. And the boom-and-bust cycle continues. Sometimes you are doing really well and other times you really just kind of give up on the idea that you’ll ever really change in this area. Maybe it’s just your cross to bear, you think.

You may hear this message and think “Well, I know I have to try harder”, as if that is the whole essence of the thing. It is not. The problem is that the law cannot overcome your sins; that’s what grace does. There is no saving power in law. There is no sustainable keeping of the law (in other words, doing what you ought to do) apart from the pull of grace. Jesus does want you to repent from sin, but it is grace that enables repentance and belief that accompanies it. Repentance problems are always belief problems. You need to understand how grace is designed to work in your life, and the joyful worship it creates. Otherwise, obedience is just behavior management.

You cannot cure sin by pouring law on it. But when you pour gospel in your heart, when the gospel saturates your head, things change. When you truly behold the gospel, you can’t help but grow in Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:18 – *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* The law cannot supply what it demands. But when you fix your gaze on Jesus, not just looking at him, but keeping the eyes of your heart on him, you are continually transformed. This is not will power. It *comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

To become like Jesus, you need to behold him. That's how obedience becomes wonderful instead of weary. That's when obedience is a worshipful response, not an attempt to leverage God. You fix your eyes on the finished work of Christ and you're free to delight in the law, not crumple under it. This creates passion, not laziness.

People aren't lazy because they're forgiven; they're lazy because they think obedience is only a burden, not a blessing. When people are lazy or rebellious, they do have a sin problem, but the root is a worship problem. The truth is that you worship your way into sin, and you have to worship your way out. Your affections are set somewhere else. And wherever your affections are set is where your behavior will go. Where your affections go your behavior follows.

Now we've come full circle. This truth, that wherever your affections are set is where your behavior will go, leads you back to Jesus' lesson in Matthew 6:19-21. This is how you can cooperate with God's grace in your sanctification, and spend your heart rightly, and be refreshed and replenished, even as you give, and get things done. You serve God by serving other people, you earn rewards in heaven, and you increase your experience of love, joy, peace, and delight in God more and more in this life.

Here it is. You set your affections on the things of God by sending your treasure to God, by spending your treasure (money, time, talent, resources) on the things of God. This moves it beyond the abstract "look at God". This kind of grace does not produce laziness. What this does to the work of obedience is something you can't just muster up on your own power. It's like the difference between living the Christian life in a sailboat with Captain Jesus or a rowboat with Captain You.

Remember, where your affections go your behavior follows. So, spend your heart rightly.

Jesus is always worth it.