

Title: The Stubborn Heart

Text: Romans 2:5-11

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Place: Decatur Church of God

Theme: Romans

It was a Sabbath day early in Jesus public ministry. Much like we do on Sundays, Jesus was in the habit of joining with the worshiping community by entering into the synagogue, his local place of worship. In the gospel of Mark we discover that on this one particular day he was joined at the synagogue with a man who had a withered hand.

For us today who know the heart of Jesus and his power to effect healing, we begin to anticipate that somewhere in this story we expect Jesus to reach out and make this man's hand whole. This is the kind of response that we have come to accept as consistent with the nature of Jesus.

Jesus doesn't disappoint us. Jesus has him stand up in front of the crowd.

Something we don't always think about is why Jesus performs these healing miracles. Surely, his heart is moved with compassion. He loves us with a pure and Godly love and our sorrow and our pain move him. Remember how he wept when his friends Mary and Martha ached over the death of their brother, Lazarus.

Still, not everyone in Israel experienced healing. There were lepers that were not cleansed. There were blind folks that did not receive their sight and there were cripples that were not made whole. Why?

I don't know every reason but I do know one of them. Jesus often used his miraculous touch to teach important and significant principles concerning the nature of God.

Jesus has the man stand up front. He is about to teach.

Jesus knows that he has enemies in the crowd but that does not stop him from teaching or doing what he knows to be just.

He asks a very poignant question, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"

Bear in mind that the religious leaders had historically taken the Ten Commandments and expanded upon them developing a system of laws that dictated to responses each person should make to every event, condition, and situation that life might present. (Does it sound like I might be meddling in politics again?)

The Pharisees are waiting for Jesus to break the religious law that they have developed. Jesus knows the set-up and turns it back on them. Which is better to heal the man or allow his body to experience deformity and its accompanying issues? Common sense tells us it is better to heal. The crowd will accept that but the Pharisees remain quiet.

Jesus tells the man, "Stretch out your hand." He doesn't touch him but as the man obeys and stretches out his hand he is completely healed.

Now this is a wonderful account demonstrating Jesus compassion and his ability to teach but notice this in the scripture:

Mark 3:5-6

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

The point that I want to make this morning is that Jesus was distressed at their stubborn hearts. Even though God was manifest in the man's healing, the Pharisees left the synagogue and began to plot with the Herodians on how they might kill Jesus.

They desired an outcome that was not dependent upon what is right or just but what fit their own agenda.

Have things changed so much?

Romans 2:5-11

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶God "will give to each person according to what he has done." ⁷To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

Being stubborn and unrepentant to God will bring 5 consequences.

1. It brings forth God's angry judgment. (v. 5)

Romans 2:5

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Though we would not have admitted it at the time, my brother Doug and I were great friends growing up. Two years difference in our age we played, worked and got into trouble together. There is one big difference...I learned quickly that an unrepentant heart resulted in longer periods of punishment. Whether the repentance was genuine or not, it was best to appear contrite.

A proud heart did not win points with my Dad. And Doug never did learn that laughing at my mother's attempt to spank him would only result in the wrath of God, or my Dad, who at that time in our life often appeared to be the same.

A. What is a stubborn heart?

* In his article titled "Unreasonable Doubt," Jim Spiegel quotes two contemporary philosophers who have resisted belief in God for personal and not just intellectual reasons. Thomas Nagel, an atheist who authored a popular introduction to philosophy titled *What Does It All Mean?* wrote: "I want atheism to be true ... It isn't just that I don't believe in God, and, naturally, hope that I'm right about my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that."

The 20th-century ethics philosopher Mortimer Adler (who was baptized quietly at age 81) confessed to rejecting religious commitment for most of his life because it "would require a radical change in my way of life, a basic alteration in the direction of my day-to-day choices as well as in the ultimate objectives to be sought or hoped for The simple truth of the matter is that I did not wish to live up to being a genuinely religious person."

- B. A stubborn heart makes God angry.
- C. His anger will find expression in his judgment.

2. It brings forth in measure according to what one has done.(v. 6)

Romans 2:6

God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

- A. Human beings are not infallible in making judgment decisions.
 - a. It might be freeing someone considered unjustly imprisoned.
 - b. It might be determining who caused the death of another.
 - c. It might be holding a thief accountable.
 - d. It might be in blaming me for eating the last raisin cookie.
- B. Nonetheless, we must face the consequences of our decisions.

* If we choose to drive too fast on the highway, it is likely that we will receive a ticket. If we smoke too much, we may develop lung cancer. If we refuse to exercise, we may develop heart problems. Surprised? No.

3. It brings trouble and distress. (v. 9)

Romans 2:9

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;

- A. There will be a harsh response to all who choose to do what is wrong/evil.
 - a. It may not be in this life.
 - b. There is, however, an eternal payment that will be made.

* I have heard that some people because of circumstances have skipped their monthly house payments. But sometime, down the road, a final accounting will be made.

Live for evil and you will pay the price!

- B. Jew or Gentile, it will be required.

4. It brings eternal death. (vs. 7-8)

Romans 2:7-8

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

- A. Those who seek to honor God will receive eternal life.
- B. Those who reject God and follow after evil will experience his wrath and anger (eternally).

Rev. 20:13-15

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

5. It brings a fair decision. (vs. 10-11)

Romans 2:10-11

But glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

A. Jesus' first appearance was to the Jewish community where he first preached, taught, and healed.

* The mere possession of the law gives the Jew no position of advantage. It only determines the standard by which he shall be judged. Those who will experience divine wrath and indignation are they who look on their good works as achievements by which they expect to claim the favor of God.

The Jew will not be excused because he has the law nor will the Gentile because he lacks the law. God requires the Jews to hear the law and do it and he has written upon the heart and entrusted to the Gentiles conscience that they must do what is required of them.

B. Now through the Apostle Paul and others the word of God is being given to the Gentile community.

- a. It is not intended to be hierarchical.
- b. God's heart is that the whole world be reconciled to Him.

Acts 10:34

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism."

Conclusion: Our stubborn heart will keep us from God.

Notice the conversation between Max, a first grader and his dad, Todd.

Dad: Max! Why didn't you answer me when I called you?

Max: I didn't hear you, Dad.

Dad: What do you mean you didn't hear me?

Max does not respond.

Dad: How many times didn't you hear me?

Max: I don't know, maybe three or four times.

How many times has God called you? Are you facing the wrath of God or the forgiveness of God?

You choose!