

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend David J. Powers
Sunday, July 31, 2022

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

the grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our lord endures forever amen

so i was in i was in high school the first time a youth leader met me for coffee and asked me a question that would come up numerous times over the next decade we are seated across from each other and i thought we were just going to hang out and he leaned in and he said david i need to ask you how's your heart it's an interesting question no one had ever asked me that before how's your heart i would learn over time to to hear it as some sort of code right i wouldn't hear it as a innocent request of a friend to a friend to check in it was a loaded phrase i'd hear it over and over and over again from my friends that would consider themselves more faithful in this walk of jesus christ how's your heart david really how's your heart they would ask me as if they already knew that there was something going on something that was that i was wrestling with and and they simply wanted me to expose it to the light of day how's your heart and so i began to resist when people would ask me that question i would turn around on my worst days my heart's fine how's your heart

this isn't about me this is about you that would happen all the way through college and even into my early years in seminary and then people stopped asking i realized that over a decade uh that question for me had actually shifted what was initially for me a shallow question some kind of weird way of circumventing the journey of faith some work around to try to get me to expose some deep vulnerable part of me people stopped asking that question it was only then that i realized how significant that question had become for me because over time by spirit and chemistry of some kind that's beyond my knowledge that question had shifted it became a question i began to ask myself during my daily devotional reading scripture or some sort of reflection i would check in i wouldn't say it aloud but i'd ask myself quietly all right david you're about to begin your day how's your heart today

for us as we have navigated what it means to be the body of christ we've talked about all sorts of different parts that are at work outside of ourselves our hands and our our feet our voices things that that move out and away from us but but this part of us draws us back to the very center of our being the heart

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and so i ask you not with no expectations for an answer but i ask you as we begin our time this day to reflect on how your heart is in this very moment to check in with yourself

the text that we have this day speaks of the heart of jesus christ and if we are to understand the context into which he he spoke these words in the gospel of matthew we we ought to pay attention to to culturally what the heart represented in his time of ministry the time of jesus christ amongst the faithful but also amongst the entire empire and indeed the world the heart was the center of one's being the heart held who one was the heart was the place deep within from once all emotions came so when you felt deep joy you were in touch with your heart deep sadness you were in touch with your heart anger your heart forgiveness your heart henry nouwen puts it this way from the heart arise unknowable impulses as well as conscious feelings and moods and wishes the heart has its reasons and it is the center of perception and understanding the heart is the seat also of the will it makes plans and comes to good decisions thus the heart is the central and unifying organ of our personal and communal lives for now in the heart was indeed the place where god dwelled within us

that's really important for us to hear this day because as presbyterians or those who are maybe going to dabble in presbyterianism sometime soon we have the propensity to over intellectualize our journey of faith we have a deep and rich history of great thinkers of the faith we have volumes upon volumes of theology and apologetics many of you perhaps as you were going through confirmation memorized long statements of faith questions and answers it was a way of of trying to place within you a knowledge of god and that is a worthwhile journey for us and yet we do have the ability when we do not want to truly feel something to stay in our heads to spend time there to think rather than to feel

and so that's why it's important for us to know that for the people in the time of jesus the heart was the center it was the place of sensing and feeling it was the place from which faithfulness and hope and love and grace would spring and this distinction between over intellectualizing and and feeling and sensing is an important one because it's actually how jesus qualifies our text today we began in verse 28 but if you go back to verse 25 jesus in a prayer to god the father says i thank you father lord of heaven and earth because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and you have revealed them to the infants all the thinking in the world can't get us to where we need to get to when it comes to reflecting the heart of jesus christ and then later jesus gives this invitation one i read just a few moments ago to all those who have gathered that day i want to imagine maybe it was rainy the morning when he said this to the people maybe they were in a place where they had not spent a whole lot of time maybe they couldn't hear him all that well maybe they were hungry maybe they were tired but they had gathered all in together hopeful and excited for a living word and he says to them this come to

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me all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and i will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for i am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light you've gathered in this day you people trying to figure out what it looks like to follow in the ways of jesus christ

and just like the people 2 thousand years ago there is this invitation the very heart of jesus he is saying come to me with everything you have come to me with all your grief and all your worry come to me with all your frustration and your anger come to me with your disappointment and your deep sadness bring those heavy burdens to me in this place right now

come to me also with your love and your hope and your excitement and your expectation come to me and leave those in the place right before me come to me all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and i will give you rest

i think howard thurman taps into this somehow the root of what jesus is trying to communicate that in the stillness of quiet if we listen we could hear the whisper of the heart giving strength to weakness and courage to fear and hope to despair

here's what i imagine as we have studied together this summer reflecting on each of the different parts that make up the body of christ my hope for you and there's always still time if you haven't done this but my hope is that you have spent time reflecting on indeed how you are called to embody christ in the world if you're a listener we need you to listen here if you've been given a voice of a prophet we need to hear your voice if you have caring hands or hands that are willing to serve we need those here at idlewild if you can carry someone on a journey maybe drive a bus and bring him here on a sunday you can allow your feet to take you to a place you've never been before we need you here and we need that here

eyes and ears and hands and feet tongue and heart we cannot be the body except by the very spirit of god working within us

but this morning christ says disciples come bringing your heavy burden i know it better than you do and i know that in my presence you can find rest for your soul

two months ago we started this journey

of what it means to be the body with a quote from teresa of avila and i want us to come back to it as we conclude our time this morning

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she says this christ has no body but yours

no hands no feet on earth but yours yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world yours are the feet with which he walks to do good yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world

yours are the hands yours are the feet yours are the eyes you are his body christ has no body now on earth but yours

so i ask you again from the center of your being how's your heart today

the heart of jesus christ invites the weary and the heavy burdens to find rest for their souls so may we the body of christ that is idlewild presbyterian church do the same may we joyfully respond to god's call to be the body to each other and to our neighbors and to the world in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit one god mother of us all amen