



Welcome to our Sunday Service (7/03/21)

Guard your Heart

Prepared by Kathryn Bedford

Lord I come to You, let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace, that I've found in You
Lord I've come to know, the weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away, by the power of Your love

Chorus

Hold me close, let Your love surround me
Bring me near, draw me to Your side
And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You, Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love

Lord unveil my eyes, let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love, as You live in me
Lord renew my mind, as Your will unfolds in my life
In living every day, by the power of Your love

By Geoff Bullock

Happy Birthday to...

Jan (1st Mar)

Barbara (10th Mar)

Dan (12th Mar)

Steve K (13th Mar)



God Bless You All!

Father God, we want to take time to be with you today. Thank you that you see right into each of our hearts and that you know us completely. We ask that you would touch our hearts in a fresh way today and fill us to overflowing with your goodness and love. We ask this so that people would meet Jesus through us. Amen

What is our heart? Not the one that pumps blood around our bodies, but the heart that we are talking about when we refer to our innermost person. That central part of us, the essence of who we are as people. What do we actually know about our hearts?

The bible has masses to say about our heart, and the wide spectrum of conflicting emotions that can flow from it, and the inner landscapes that can define it. Hearts can be hardened or melted by circumstances, cold or warm, barren or fruitful, faithful or adulterous, sorrowful or joyful, sincere or false, heavy or light. It can burn with desire or conviction. It can grow faint, or be revived, be divided. It can measure how much of itself it applies to things. It can be communed with, and searched with our minds. 'My head says No, but my heart says Yes' It's pretty hard to understand the complexity of our heart!



We also know from our collective experiences that our hearts have incredible capacity for storing and containing. Within that capacity can be stored good, wholesome, beautiful things, increasingly so, if our hearts are being restored by God, the great heart specialist! The heart has hidden depths and recesses; deep interiors where trauma can be sealed and painful memories or hurtful words can be buried. Caverns where rage or deep rejection can be suppressed or slabbed over. Chambers where guilty secrets can be locked away. Harbours of bitterness and unforgiveness, self righteousness and pride, even spiritual pride. The toxic stored emotions all too often leech into our mental and physical health, poisoning our capacity to bear the image of God and reflect his glory.

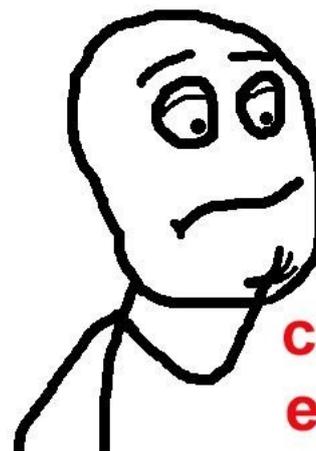
A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Proverbs 17: 22

Anxiety in the heart of men causes depression. Proverbs 12: 25

By sorrow of heart, the spirit is crushed. Prov 15: 13

There are plenty of medical studies out there showing that the storing away of negative, destructive emotions can have a destructive effect on our physical and mental health.

Jesus said that we can get a pretty good measure of what's stored in our hearts by the stuff that comes out of our mouth!



...I feel conflicting emotions...

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Luke 6:45

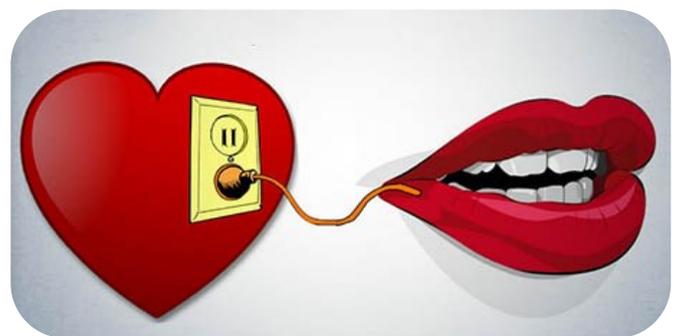
He also spoke of the hearts deceptive capacity to appear as something it isn't, particularly in his dealings with the Pharisees. He didn't mince his words when confronting their inner landscapes.

You are like **whitewashed tombs**, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

Matt 23: 27

"These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Matt 15: 8-9

Mervyn referred to that famous quote by St Irenaeus a couple of weeks ago. "The glory of God is the heart of man fully alive"



"The glory of God is the heart of man fully alive."

- St. Irenaeus

How faint are the echoes of that previous glory bestowed upon our hearts in the Garden of Eden when the heart knew what it was to be fully alive. God created us with a heart because he desires to have a warm, loving relationship with us in which we share in his life!

Outside of that relationship, look at what our hearts have become. **The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9**

Even as Christians we haven't always understood that the condition of our heart is critical in our relationship with God. Many of our struggles are really heart problems and we, too often find ourselves looking for short term solutions that damage our hearts further.

So let's ask ourselves 3 questions today and look to God's manual of the heart. His Word.

What is the human heart?

What has happened to it?

Where is it?



What is the heart? Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it is the wellspring of life

How central the heart is to our existence and so important, that we are to guard it above everything else. Every thing that we are and do flows out of our hearts. It is our source, the ruling centre of the whole person, the spring of all desires. It's the centre of spiritual activity and all the operations of human life. It is made up of our mind, our will, our emotions and our conscience. It thinks, it decides and senses right and wrong. Our heart is the gateway of our whole being, whatever we 'open' or 'close' the doors of our heart to, determines what we allow into our innermost being. I'm reminded of a song I used to sing with my children when they were little, a simple children's song, yet full of profound truth



O be careful little eyes what you see ... little ears what you hear, little feet where you go...

Guarding what enters into us is critical in determining our heart condition. There may be areas in your life and mine that the Holy Spirit wants to convict us about today. Let's be open to his voice.

What is the heart? Our heart is the well spring of life and we need to guard it!

What has happened to it ?

We see from God's word that our hearts have been attacked, and continue to be under attack. Your heart has an enemy!

1 Peter 5:8, NIV: "Be alert, (on your guard) and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour". (easy pickings)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

So often we forget that we have an enemy whose purpose and intent is to steal, kill and destroy. One of his greatest strategies is to cause us to think he's not really there! In the book by C.S Lewis, "The Screwtape letters," Screwtape, an experienced devil is mentoring his nephew, a young demon at the start of his career and assignment to destroy a young man who has just become a Christian. He says, "... It is essential to keep your patient in ignorance of your own existence.... Our policy for the moment is to conceal ourselves..."

We see in Acts 5 that Satan **filled the heart** of Ananias. In Luke 22 he **entered the heart** of Judas Iscariot. In the parable of the sower, **he snatches the word of God from our hearts** and in 2 Corinthians 4, he **blinds our minds to the gospel**. We need to take seriously that warning to **'guard your heart above everything else'**.

We're going to look at just a few out of many possessions that God has given us, we may not have realised that we have these possessions, but they are very precious and they are possessions which the enemy wants to destroy, and which we need to assertively guard.

Your Faith:

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13

Paul is encouraging the Corinthian believers to guard against the 'watering down' of their faith in the resurrection, and to guard against false teaching. He is also telling them to stand firm and be courageous, as faith in Jesus will be opposed by the culture around them. So many Christians unwittingly allow the enemy to steal their faith, not necessarily by committing some major sin, but through the failure to guard it and they slowly just drift away as time spent with God and in his word just doesn't take priority anymore.

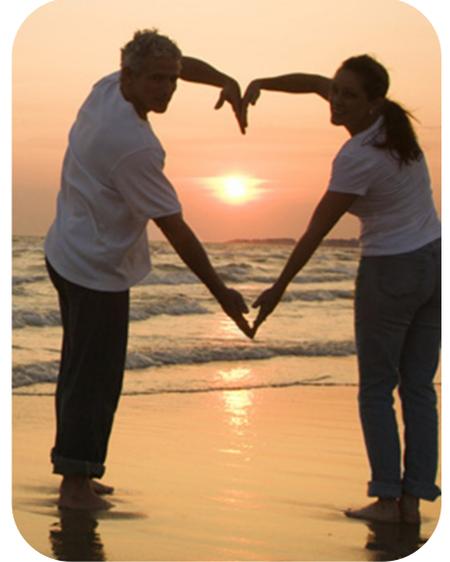


Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called
Timothy 6: 12

Your relationships:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with **one** another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

Satan wants to destroy relationships and communities where we love, encourage and bless each other. He wants us to be alone and isolated and will often use anger, dis-unity and pride to break fellowship. He seeks to kill healthy marriages, families and friendships. He's perfectly happy with unhealthy, destructive, controlling and abusive relationships and contributes whatever he can to their survival. How do we guard our relationships? By walking in the light of God, openly and honestly bringing our attitudes, responses, thoughts, speech and actions under his scrutiny. We invite the Holy Spirit to work in us, to teach us how to walk and talk in love and humility, preferring the needs of others to our own. To respect and love others who think differently to us, rather than cutting people off because we may have the audacity to think we have got everything right and have nothing to learn. This is where Satan often has a hey day destroying churches and damaging individuals, so they never go near a church again.



Your Peace:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4: 6-7

We are encouraged to bring all of our circumstances and requests to God and by doing so with an attitude of thankfulness, it constantly reminds us of how faithful God has already been to us and the ways he has already led us through our life so far, with his faithfulness and goodness, provision and protection. It's then that the peace of God can guard our hearts from anxiety and panic. Satan wants to steal your peace, so that you become stressed, annoyed and frazzled.



Your Joy:

Joy is a deep, calm confidence and understanding that all will be well. It's being chilled out and secure in the future, even in the face of trials and hardship. Satan wants to derail us by stealing our joy through trials. Part of guarding our hearts is to decide to respond to trials with joy – it's something we choose to do. Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.... James 1: 2-4

Your destiny:

Satan does not want you to do what God created you to do. We can so easily forget that. We let our guard down and spend entire seasons just thinking about our own agenda. In **Mark Ch 5**, we read about a man from whom Satan had stolen a great deal: his dignity, his relationships, his sanity, his peace and joy. Rather than walking in his destiny, he lived among the tombs; he was smelly, isolated, demon possessed and was crying at night, self-harming, he was in so much pain. Jesus sets out to go to this region to find this man. In the previous chapter, we discover that their mission has been opposed by a ferocious storm on the way. Jesus rebukes the storm. As the boat lands, the man comes from the tombs to meet Jesus, he sets the man free and restores all that has been stolen. The people come out and see him sitting next to Jesus in his right mind. Jesus said, **“The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that they might have life in all it’s fullness”**. We have a gospel to proclaim that is restorative, that destroys the work of the evil one. If the storm you are facing feels relentless and the pain is driving you mad, Jesus is seeking you out. Like the man living in the tombs, come to meet him, give him your heart, and give him permission to come against all that has come against you, believing that God’s heart is to set you free to walk in your destiny. Allow God’s people to minister to your needs, to pray with you and take the strain where you may be exhausted. **What has happened to our hearts? They have been attacked; we need to fight for them, resist the enemy and stay alert to his mission to steal, kill and destroy.**



Where is my heart? The heart can be fragmented, it can be given away to people and things in trade offs all over the place. Maybe, you have no idea where your heart is. Pieces of it may be still lodged in previous relationships. It may have been broken and wounded. It may be given over to a driving ambition. It may have been betrayed and you’ve decided not to trust anyone again. It may be really stuck, desperate for a solution that will break the power of an addiction or idolatry. Jesus tells us exactly where we can locate our heart.



Wherever your treasure is, that’s where you’ll find your heart. We have treasured all sorts of things, some good and life-giving and others that we have been perhaps tricked into thinking would turn out to be treasure but was anything but! Everything good, everything honourable, everything beautiful or lovely, or kind comes from God and his Kingdom. When we build and stockpile his beautiful treasures in our lives, that is the place that our heart can be made new and truly flourish

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-20

Prov 23:26 My son, **give me your heart** and let **your eyes** delight in my ways,

Only the deep, love of God and the power of his word has the power to transform our hearts and restore the broken pieces, bringing them to life. God can be trusted with your heart. He promises never to break a bruised reed or snuff out a smouldering light.

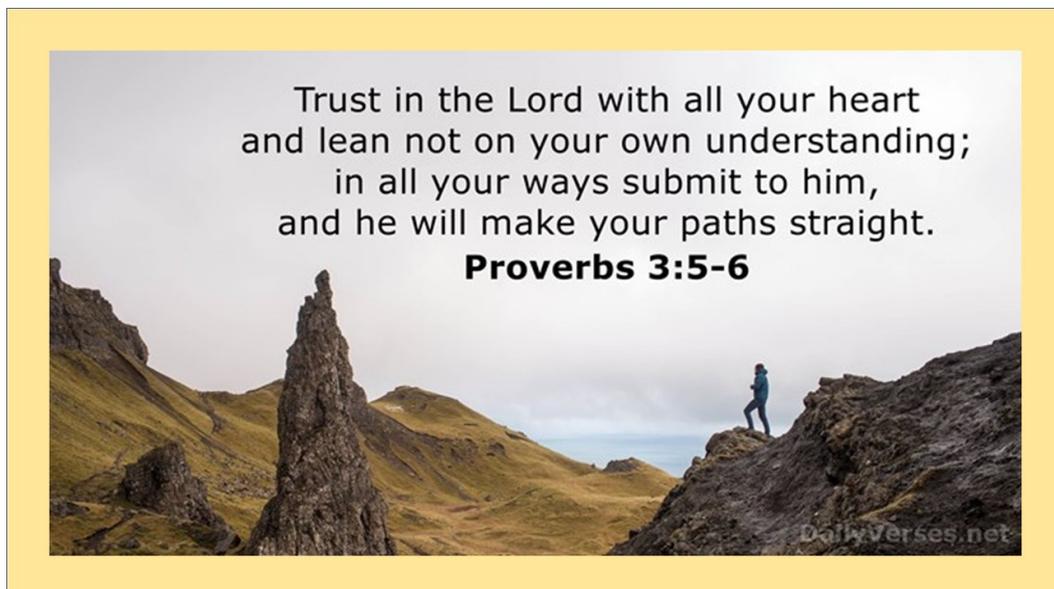
Where is my heart? Our heart is located amongst whatever it regards as treasure. We can **give** our hearts to God and **stockpile** his treasure in our hearts, treasure that can be never be stolen or destroyed and will be kept safe for now and for our future.

If we want the 'life in all it's fullness' that Jesus offers, then we need to deliberately and proactively partner with God in order to guard our heart, fight for it's possessions, and continually give it to him as his workmanship.

A bit like a garden that is never maintained, our hearts can become barren, choc-o-bloc with weeds and invasive plants -that suffocate everything else - unfruitful, and a dumping ground for junk.



Above everything else, will you guard your heart, for it is the well spring of life?



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of The Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen