



**February 21, 2021**

**Lenten Season "Return to the Lord"**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent**

**Symbol: Bread and Wine**



**Core Value: Worship & Generosity**

**Sermon "Where is your heart?"—Rev. A.N. Mary Adelsberger**

I want to start this morning with a question: Where is your heart?

This is much like where our Bishop has started this year. We are in the year of Generosity in our synod. Greg Silliman and Bill McCall have started teaching this morning the adult class zoom using our Bishop's study for the year. The bishop has asked us to memorize the verse: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

This very verse begets the question, what is your treasure and where is your heart?

Let me start by telling you a rather unusual story that I came across some years ago. On 24th February 1948, one of the most unusual operations in medical history took place - at the Department of Research Surgery at Ohio State University. A stony sheath was removed from around the heart of Harry Besharra, a man thirty years of age. When only a boy he had accidentally been shot by a school friend with a .22-caliber rifle. The bullet had lodged in his heart but had not killed him, so the doctors just left it there. However, little did they know that a lime deposit had begun to form over the protective covering of the heart and gradually was strangling it. The operation was a delicate one. It required the separating the ribs and moving the left lung to one side. Then the stony coating was lifted from the heart as an orange is peeled. Immediately the pressure of the heart was reduced, and it responded by expanding and pumping normally. "I feel a thousand per cent better already," said the patient soon after the operation.

And there is a parable of life in this story too. Our hearts develop a hard protective coating because of accidents and incidents in life. They are coated by the deposits of a thousand deceits and rebuffs. They are hardened by the pressure of circumstances. And they can squeeze the real life out of us. So....

Where is your heart?

Let's look at some of the Scriptures relating to the heart.

Matt. 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart-For they will see God."

Prov. 27:19 "As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man."

Proverbs 23:26 "My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep my ways."

Now let's consider the definition of the heart: 1. An organ that DISTINGUISHES the LIVING from the DEAD. 2. it forms the central part of a man.

I think maybe we might consider that there are three types of heart:

## I. A Degenerate Heart

## II. A Divided Heart and

## III. A Delivered Heart

I think there is really only one heart that God eventually sees. As we confess, God only sees one kind of heart.... a beautiful heart because he delivers all heart. He wants us to have a perfect heart and sees that potential. And He wants us to use this beautiful heart to be a bridge of his love to the community. Listen to the wonderful promise in Ez. 36: 25-26, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you - A NEW HEART and put a NEW SPIRIT within you. I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

Once our heart is clean, we are free to worship and to faithfully serve, and be continually renewed by that experience. But our worship, service, church experience is not just for us alone. We became open, softened, diverse, embracing...seeking the needs of others first. We also become ambassadors.

'We're Christ's representatives, God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their defenses and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now.' Today I want us to follow Paul's line of thought in this passage, to allow God's Spirit to speak to us and bless our hearts and challenge us afresh with our mission in His name. Paul uses some wonderful language for us and our task, great emotive language of reconciliation and ambassadorial roles. I long to see us fired by the same dream for the communities God has called us to serve so let's get stuck into the scripture - follow God's call to love Him and neighbor with our beautiful heart.

He has destroyed the barrier that existed between us, AND we are called to do no less. To break down the barriers that separate and be reconciliation to our communities. He has broken every barrier down - let us do likewise. Let us be Ambassadors for Jesus.

Let me tell you what you are really good at: Faithful Generosity, and a Desire for Missions. Now apply that to calls He's making to us. Be in relationship—worship, study with Him and with others through connections, programs, evangelism. His body was poured out as a drink offering for us, now we are the body of Christ to be poured out as ambassadors, not as a stumbling block for others. We are the bridge to His love, this is our treasure, this is where our heart lives.