

GraceNotes

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GROWING IN GRACE “The Heart of the Matter”

There's a century-old stone house in Houston, Texas, with a fireplace overarched by a wooden mantle that bears the carved message – “If Your Heart is Cold, My Fire Cannot Warm It.” It's a reminder that ‘heart conditions’ cannot be reached or changed superficially. To be sure, the heart is a literal physical organ, but in the message of note “heart” belongs to the spiritual domain. Its condition is a matter of the soul's inner-sanctum content. From hence hearts are warm or cold, happy or sad, joyful or woeful, cheerful or fearful, light or heavy, soft or hard, whole or broken.

February is “Heart Month.” It includes a yearly national campaign to raise awareness about heart disease. It is no accident that February was chosen for such since the calendar includes Valentine's Day on February 14th. Of course, valentines – at least those sent for sentimental sake – are heart-shaped. They are frequently accompanied by chocolates, roses, jewelry, or poetic expressions of love. But the best and highest accompaniments are gestures of giving, helping, serving, and sacrificing. Those bear the shape of love with greatest significance. Jesus demonstrated the same through His life and ministry, the supreme example of which was at the Cross. Again, there are manifold conditions of the heart determined by a range of content. It's clear that Jesus' heart contained the very love of God. What does our heart contain?

What is found in the heart has everything to do with what the heart treasures. Jesus said, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Mt. 6:21). So, the most heart-probing question that can be asked is, “Where's your treasure?” The most heart-throbbing answer that can be uttered is, “My treasure is Jesus.” And the most heart-healing experience that can be entered is “*being filled with the fullness of God's love*” (Eph. 3:19). It gives a whole new meaning to “heart-condition.”

As we continue GROWING IN GRACE together, perhaps February is the perfect time to join David in praying, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way*” (Ps. 139:23-24). Hearts pump blood in bodies; hearts flutter on Valentine's Day, but what is most important are hearts filled with Jesus. Paul gets to the heart of the matter in Ephesians 3:17-19:

“May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length, and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

From the heart,
Ed