

"God's Cure for Heart Disease"

THE SILENT KILLER

How many here know what is the number one cause of death in the US? Until last year it had been heart disease. Year after year decade after decade heart disease took more lives than any other anything else. Last year, for the first time cancer took the number one spot. Heart disease thankfully has been on the decline.

It has been on the decline because of effective efforts to combat it. And we've seen the advertisements for the wide range of cholesterol reducing drugs. Ads that tell us the cause of heart disease – **heredity and lifestyle**. Most of us are already born with a predisposition to develop hardening of the arteries – hence our **heredity**. And just as important is **our lifestyle** – do we eat right, do we smoke or drink excessive amounts of alcohol, do we exercise, etc,

The problem with heart disease is that it takes place with no outward symptoms. It is the silent killer. Hence the advertisement where the a beautiful actress is getting out of the limosine, with cameras flashing and people watching in awe, only then to see her stumble and fall on the carpet or the man who struts his stuff in front of three ladies at the pool only to dive in the water with a belly flop. They have everything going for them except high cholesterol.

If you don't have a blood test, if your blood pressure isn't taken, if you don't take precautions all of a sudden you can have a heart attack and there is nothing you can do about. Sometimes there are warning signs, sometimes there're not.

Now if you're wondering what this has to do with our lessons from Scripture, hold on just a minute – for there is another heart disease that is far worse than the heart disease I just mentioned. And it is this heart disease that is also a silent killer and it is one that we better make sure we are combating as well.

THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE WORLDS

You know much of what we can see in the visible physical world has parallels to the invisible spiritual realm. In fact, we can understand the spiritual world through what we see.

For example, we see creation, and even though we cannot see our Creator, we know that He exists because in order for anything to happen in our world there must be a cause, and there must be a plan and there must be a design. Things in life don't happen by accident. They happen by choice, or they happen by design. There is a cause. Hence, we read in **Hebrews 11:3**: ***"By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible."***

There is the Kingdom of this world, or the kingdoms of man, and then there is the Kingdom of God. St. Paul tells us in **1 Cor. 15** that ***there is a physical body there is also a spiritual body***. Just as we know right and wrong and are accountable to our parents and then to the government, in the same way we will be accountable to God, whom we do not see. There will be a judgement, there will be punishment. And just as there is evil manifested in the physical realm there is evil in the spiritual realm. Hence Paul's

warning to us in Eph. *That we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers and principalities of darkness.*

SPIRITUAL HEARTS

And just as there are physical hearts, there are also spiritual hearts.

Now we all know that in our physical bodies, the heart is the single most important organ. It is a remarkable creation that pumps blood to the rest of our body . It pumps day after day week after week month after month, year after year without fail until one point in time it stops and without it the body ceases to function.

Likewise, there is another kind of heart that we have. We can't see this heart, though, with the naked eye, but it is there nonetheless. It makes up the essence of who we are as human beings. Because you see we more than just bodies with organs in them. We are persons made in the image of God. Human beings who can think, reason, feel, communicate and make decisions and act upon them. And it is the spiritual heart of a person is the sum total of their mind, emotions and will all working together as a whole. This heart is also referred to as the soul in the Scriptures. It is the essence of who we are as human beings.

And for each of us, our a spiritual heart is unique and different, and it is through our heart that is able to be in relationship with God and other human beings. It is one of the things that set us apart from the animals. Just as God gave us our physical hearts, He gave us our spiritual hearts.

THE CURSE

And just as there is heart disease in our physical hearts, there is heart disease in our spiritual hearts.

What did we hear from the prophet Jeremiah? *"The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse – who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9)*

Devious! The word devious means **deceitful**, it means untrustworthy. You can't trust the human heart. You can't trust your own heart by itself.

Dr. Leonard Keeler, the man who invented the lie detector said that after giving over 25,000 tests, he found that people are basically deceptive. It's why a recent national survey found that 66% of those polled indicated that lying is "ok" and only 33% agreed that "honesty is the best policy."

It's why a person can fall in love and then later not have those feelings. It's why someone can achieve great success and accomplishment and then all of a sudden snap and try to kidnap and kill somebody like the unfortunate Astronaut Lisa Nowak. It's why some who have seemingly everything take their own life.

Or it's why people fall into the trap of thinking that if it feels right and good it must be right and good only to suffer the consequences of their folly later on. *"There is a way that seems right to a man but only leads to death."*

Our spiritual hearts are not only deceitful, but they are perverse – which can also be translated desparately corrupt. In other words, there's nothing good in themselves.

There is a reason for this corruption, there is a reason for the deceptions - **heredity and lifestyle**. We are predisposed to sin because of the curse of our first parents on this world. And we will naturally tend to engage in self-destructive behavior when we trust in self which manifests itself by how we live – by how we think what we say and how we act, but it stems from the heart.

And that's why Jeremiah says: ***“Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord.”***

There are three things that happen – 1) trust in man, 2) trust in self, and 3) turning away from God.

All are futile, vain and cursed. The human heart is evil without God.

And the truth is what flesh can you lean on? Your loved ones are just flesh. Your father, your mother, your wife, your husband, your children-they are all just flesh. They cannot help you when you come down to the end of life's journey .Can you trust in flesh? Can flesh save you and take you to heaven? Can flesh bring you into the other world? The man who trusts in man sooner or later learns that he is cursed. Notice, it doesn't say that the man has departed from outward religious activity. He may be going to church and Sunday School. He may be teaching a class. He may be carrying on some definite religious program in his life. But in his heart, he may have departed from God! And if that's the case we're in trouble.

And Jeremiah says that as a result, there will be consequences – Look at what happens? Have you ever been to a salt mine? There's nothing but salt. Nothing can grow, there are no animals, just salt. It's not good.

Now sometimes this selfishness will be found in seemingly good works. Look what I have done. But our good works done in the name of self are just as wicked before God's eyes. ***Our righteousness is as filthy rags before the Lord.*** Why? ***There is none righteous, no not one. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.***

It isn't about good works. Without the Lord we are nothing. We are cursed, there is no hope

God is not fooled.

And that is why there are so many problems in our world. We are a world in rebellion against our God our Father. But the good news is there is a cure for the curse. There is a solution to the problem. ***The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.***

THE CURE

God has it all worked out. God loves us despite ourselves, despite our selfishness. In fact, God has the answer to any of the problems in our universe. The One who holds the universe like it is in the palm of His hand. If you were to travel at the speed of light (more than 186,000 miles per second), in two seconds you would be past the moon; in eight minutes, you would be past the sun; in four months, you would be at the edge of our solar system; and in five years, you would be to the nearest star, Alpha Centauri A. If you were to travel 100,000 years at that incredible speed, you would finally exit from our

galaxy, better known as the Milky Way. If you decided to go to the next closest galaxy, called the Great Nebula, you would travel for 1,500,000 years at the speed of 186,000 miles per second to get there. Scientists now have telescopes that can see four and one-half billion light-years into space. And yet the Bible says that our God holds all of that in the palm of his hand. He must be a mighty and powerful God.

That God is the same One who provides the cure to spiritual heart disease. And His name is Jesus Christ. Friend of sinners. God in human flesh. The One who said, *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the resurrection and the life*. The One who is and will be and forever is the same. Jesus Christ.

Notice what Jesus was doing when the people were coming to Him? He was healing them. He was restoring that which was broken. Jesus heals us. He is our cure. He is our clot buster and our artery cleaner. His blood purifies our blood. And He rose from the dead to not only show that He is the One who has power over life and death, but that He is who He said He was, and that His mission is to give life back to those who lose it. That's why the Apostle Paul wrote, "*If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is in vain...If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.*" (I Cor. 15:). The resurrection is an objective reality not a subjective feeling.

And so all we have to do is receive that cure. Because the cure is wrapped up in a relationship. When we are in relationship with Christ we have life, when we are out of relationship with Christ, we die.

Some may say isn't God everyone's Father? He is through the act of Creation, but He is not everyone's Father in the sense of relationship. A true Father is the person you have a relationship with, right? God becomes our true Father not through Creation but through Redemption, through the work of Jesus Christ. But that has to be received by faith. **John 1:12:** "*But to all who received Him, who believed in his name, He gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.*"

Salvation is a *free gift*. In fact, Paul uses this term five times in just 3 verses in **Romans 5:15-17**. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation. There is nothing we can do to cure ourselves. God alone has the cure and it is found in Christ. If we reject Christ, we reject the cure, and we have no hope.

You know many of us have been approached by people who belong to cults or other religions. If anyone comes up to you to share their beliefs ask them this simple question. "If I was to die in three minutes please tell me what I need to do to be saved?" Most will respond with a list of do's and don'ts. But the truth is all we have to do is accept the cure all we have to do is accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and ask Him to forgive us and restore us to a right relationship with God.

THE BLESSING OF KNOWING CHRIST

Now Jesus deals with the sin problem in our genes. *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive*. And when we put our faith in Christ, there will be a tremendous blessing. For once we have the cure, we have the curse of sin and death removed from our spiritual hearts. Death is no longer an enemy. We know God, we trust God, we serve God in response.

We don't have to be plagued by guilt. We don't have to be worried about our past. We don't have to be plagued by anxiety. We don't have to worry about the future. And we can rest in the present, because we know the One who made us, the One who loves us and even intercedes on our behalf.

That's why Jesus said "***Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.***" (Lk. 6:19-22).

And yet as Christians here at St. Bartholomew's we are exceedingly blessed. Someone wrote...

If you own just one Bible...you are abundantly blessed. 1/3 of all the world does not have access to one. If you woke up this morning with more health than illness...you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week. If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation...you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death...you are More blessed than three billion people in the world. If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep...you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace...you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy. If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all. --Author unknown.

One morning Robert Chapman, an English pastor and friend of C. H. Spurgeon, was asked by his friend how he was feeling. "I'm burdened this morning!" was his reply. But his happy countenance contradicted his words. His friend, rather surprised by his comment, said, "Are you really burdened, Mr. Chapman?" "Yes, but it's a wonderful burden--it's an overabundance of blessings for which I cannot find enough time or words to express my gratitude!"

When we know and trust God, when we follow the Lord Jesus Christ we are like a tree planted by streams of living water. We don't have to worry about lack, there is abundance. When we follow the One who made us and loves us we

But to keep our hearts clean, means continuing to rely on Christ every day. Jesus has taken care of the curse of sin and death in our genes, but if we are to experience true blessing in this life it means we will need to make lifestyle changes. Relying on God's power and grace, we will need to work on those areas that are not glorifying God. And when we do so, we will be blessed.

Even if we are in need, we know the One who will take care of us. There is a day coming when there will be no more sorrow, or pain, or lack, or uncertainty. There is coming a day when all of the heartache will be behind us. Jesus promised it would be so.

So until that day may we make sure our hearts are cured and may we seek to live for the One who made us and loves us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!