

THE HEART OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

Last week, the message was entitled "The cry for revival". The four main points were these:

- We need to make Jesus the center of our lives.
- We need to spend time in His presence.
- We need to seek Him whole-heartedly – with all our hearts.
- We need to press in and persevere until revival comes.

This message flows out of the third point – seeking God with all our hearts. It led me to thinking about the heart of man and the heart of God. What is so important about the heart? We need to understand the heart of God first and foremost so that we can learn to have a heart like His. It will lead us to a place where our hearts are ready for revival.

With it being Father's Day today, it's so appropriate, and this morning I will speak about the Father's heart.

MESSAGE

GOD HAS THE HEART OF A FATHER AND HE WANTS TO BE OUR FATHER

1. God sees us as children

From the very beginning, God has seen us as His children.

- He created us in His image (Genesis 1:27).
- He breathed the breath of life into us.
- and He gave us dominion.

These three things make us unique in all of creation!

2. The Bible calls us children of God

Galatians 3:26(NLT) For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

3. We are legally God's children

We have been adopted as children of God through His own Son, Jesus Christ:

Galatians 4:4-5(NLT) But when the right time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children.

4. God has placed in our hearts the desire to be His children.

Galatians 4:6-7(NLT) And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are His child, God has made you His heir.

He has placed a cry of "Father, Father" in our hearts by His Holy Spirit.

5. God loves us as His children!

John 17:26 (NKJV) And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

- Jesus asked Father God to love us with the same love with which He loved His only Son – God loves us as much as He loves Jesus, wow!

By these five things we see that God has a very clear intention of being our heavenly Father, we are certainly not alone in this world, we are not orphans and we are not unloved!

GOD'S HEART IS TO BLESS US

But Father God didn't just start loving us when He sent Jesus, or after Jesus prayed for Him to love us like He loved Jesus, He loved us right from creation and therefore He blessed us!

Genesis 1:27-28 (NLT) So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

We have already seen that God made human beings are very special, but it does not stop there, once we created, the first time God spoke to man, He pronounced a blessing:

- Be fruitful and multiply.
- Fill the earth.
- Govern the earth.
- Reign over all the animals.

Sometimes we forget this:

- We are a blessed and precious part of God's creation.
- We are fearfully and wonderfully made and God wants us to live out the blessing pronounced above.

If our Heavenly Father planned to bless us like this, we should be encouraged to rise up today to be who we are meant to be in God.

OUR FATHER HAS A SOFT HEART

I remember disciplining our children as they grew up. It was not pleasant. Many times, my emotional distress in handing out that punishment was far more than the children's physical distress... Surely Father God's love far exceeds what I am capable of!

Our God is a just God who does punish sin, we can never forget that, but to only see Him in that light will destroy our understanding of His Father Heart. To see Father God as a big stick wielding God is totally wrong, the reality is that He has a soft heart!

Yes, God does punish sin, but He loves us so much that He could not bear seeing us suffering under that punishment, so even when we were still sinning, He sent His own Son to be punished on our behalf.

- Over and over, God calls out to us to be reconciled to Him.
- Hell was created for the devil and his demons, not for us.
- When we see what God did for us in Christ, we can see His soft heart for us!

Father God's soft heart in action:

Jonah was called by God to prophesy judgement against Nineveh. Jonah really didn't like the people there because they were the enemies of Israel. He didn't want to prophesy against them because he knew that if they repented, God would forgive them, and that's exactly what happened. God forgave the people of Nineveh.

Jonah 4:2 (NLT) So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people.

We are so quick to write others off, but God is not like that:

- He has a soft heart!
- He is merciful and compassionate,
- He is slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
- He is eager to turn back from destroying people.
- He even forgives and loves sinners like us!

That is the heart of our Father. Let us learn to love like He does, being forgiving and not hard hearted. Let us learn to have a soft heart like our Father.

OUR FATHER HAS A GLAD HEART

1 Chronicles 16:27 (NLT) Honour and majesty surround Him; strength and joy fill his dwelling.

Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT) For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty Saviour. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, He will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs."

These scriptures paint a picture of a glad, joyful Father.

- Our Father's house is a house of joy.
- In our Father's presence is fullness of joy.
- Our Father's joy is so strong that it strengthens us (Nehemiah 8:10).
- Our Father takes delight in us – He finds joy in us!
- He spins and dances over us with joyful songs.

We will struggle comprehending His affection for us until we have a foundational understanding of His gladness. The Father's capacity for gladness is infinite in measure and eternal in duration. He designed the human spirit in His image, with great capacity for gladness. Wow!

- As we become students of God's emotions, we grow in understanding of His love, His tender mercy, His gladness, and His affection. In this understanding of our Father, when we stumble in sin, we will run to Him with confidence and sincere repentance instead of running from Him in condemnation and shame.

When the enemy tries to rob us of our joy, then we need to draw near to our Heavenly Father and allow some of His characteristics to rub off on us. We need to learn to be joyful just like He is and we will know a new kind of victory and sense of settledness and peace in our lives like never before.

What about in our own homes fathers? Are we full of joy and gladness or are we difficult and grumpy? Surely it will be better for the whole household if we start to reflect the character of our heavenly Father!

WE BRING JOY TO OUR FATHER'S HEART

Think about the joy that our children bring to our hearts. There's just something special about being a parent – no matter what our children tend to do, give us half a chance and we will find a reason to delight in them, show off pictures of them, brag about them, That's in our nature, and God feels the same about us!

Psalm 16:3(NKJV)As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

Job 33:26 (NKJV) He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him, He shall see His face with joy, For He restores to man His righteousness.

- God doesn't see us as vile sinners, He sees us as righteous - we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 62:4b(NKJV) But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the Lord delights in you, And your land shall be married.

Our Heavenly Father delights in us even more than we delight in our own children!

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO THE WONDERFUL FATHER HEART OF GOD?

A little boy was tempted to pluck some cherries from a tree which his father had forbidden him to touch. "You need not be afraid," said his evil companion, "for if your father should find out that you have taken them, he is too kind to hurt you." "Ah," said the brave little fellow, "that is the very reason why I would not touch them; for though my father would not hurt me, why I should hurt him by my disobedience."

- Let us please our Father with our obedience, rather than displease Him with our sin.
- Let us respond to Him in love.
- Let us walk in His footsteps (imagine a child playing with their parent's shoes. They love to put the big shoes on and try to walk in them).

CONCLUSION

Because of bad experiences and examples with natural fathers this it's not always easy to relate to God as our Father. Nevertheless, the Truth remains that our Heavenly Father is not like our earthly fathers. He outshines every one of them. He is full of love, mercy, compassion, truth, power, affection and kindness and He wants us to have a wonderful relationship with Him.

- He has the heart of a father and He wants us to be His children.
- He has a heart that wants to bless us.
- He has a soft heart.
- He has a glad heart.
- His heart delights in us, we bring Him joy.

Finally, dads, how do we reflect the heart of our father in our own homes? Can we say that the same five characteristics I just read characterise us as fathers?

If not, we can change that by making the right decision today.