

Sunday between 7th and 13th August [19]

Luke 12:32-40

Why do we hear so much about the heart in scripture? We know that our hearts are vital to life as they fundamentally power our bodies. But scriptural discussions on hearts are rarely if ever about living heart healthy lives in the physical sense, rather they refer to the heart as an emotional home within the body. The reference to the heart is well understood as a way of describing our feelings, good and bad, and our sense of loving and being loved. We refer to the heart as the organ with which we love, it might better be the tummy we ought to talk about, as it's often there that fluttering occurs when we feel romantic love, or perhaps it should be the brain that we refer to in terms of love as there is some serious thinking that goes into relationship forming. Whatever the physical reality, the language of love is filled with heart imagery, we even draw hearts or use pictures of hearts when we try to show what love looks like.

According to the Bible the heart is the place where we do our deepest thinking. That is why we often read in the gospels of Jesus 'knowing the thinking of their hearts.' Listen to these words spoken of Mary after the birth of Jesus –. She pondered these things in her heart, not she pondered them in her mind – No, in her heart.

Why is the emphasis constantly placed on the heart? It is the thoughts and the intents of our hearts that shape our lives. The image we hold is that the storehouse of our memories is held in our hearts. 'I have learned it by heart' we often say. It is inscribed in our memories but that inscription is held in our hearts. In our hearts we hang on to the most important things in our lives. That is why in Deuteronomy Moses says this to the people of God "these words which I command you this day shall be on your heart". He was speaking of the great deliverance of the people of God from slavery in Egypt. He called them to remember, to recall and to retain in their hearts the things they had seen, the plagues, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the manna and quail, the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. They had seen water from a rock and they had seen the manifestation of God's glorious power in the deliverance of the Law. These things they were to remember in their hearts and from their hearts teach them to their children.

So in our gospel today we hear Jesus continue his teaching from last week and now, rather than warning against greed, Jesus is offering positive suggestions about how we keep our relationship with God in focus and a priority in our lives. Jesus tells us that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. This is a phrase that benefits from some unpicking. The earlier part of the teaching, which was shared last Sunday, talks of the futility of storing up treasure on earth and how that can come between a person and God. This next comment follows on from this idea that our motivations in our lives and in our relationship with God need to be aligned if we are to keep focussed and fully benefit from the grace of God to us.

The obvious understanding of treasure is to think of money, and indeed Jesus does speak directly of wealth in his earlier teaching, but treasure is wider than that. We can treasure many things, people, ideas and circumstances, and just like the teaching on wealth, this is not about removing everything in our lives that is not directly relating to God. God teaches us to love one another and human relationships are very precious and something to be treasured. However, Jesus is telling us here that alignment of motivation and focus is possible and will benefit our relationship with God. Where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

The challenge posed is this; where is our treasure? Do we treasure objects, a prized possession perhaps, our home, our car? Is our treasure a relationship, a partnership, a friend, a family member? Do we treasure memories and experiences? Perhaps our treasure is a combination of many of these things or something else not mentioned here. Jesus says, whatever our treasure is, there will our heart be – the heart which is the organ of love, so in other words, those things on which we spend our time and energy are those things that we

love or will come to love. Jesus' advice to us is to store up our treasure in heaven, to follow the teaching and example of God and love people generously while loving God with our whole selves so that our treasure and our hearts are aligned.

So ask yourself again, where is your treasure? Where is your heart? Can any of us say that we love God and treasure those things which draw us closer to God right now? The latter part of the gospel warns us against delaying our movement towards God because being ready at any time is important. The examples of the household staff being ready for the master or the householder being surprised by a thief both point to the need to build this relationship with God now, today and going forward. To keep working on it as a real and present encounter because we cannot know when our time on earth will be done or when Christ will return.

By the grace of God we have been invited into relationship with the almighty. But, relationships are not like a one-way street, there needs to be engagement from both sides for this to truly work. Jesus is reminding us that this call is imperative, urgent and life changing, but we must heed the call and focus our energy to treasure it, more than any of our other treasures that distract us. Treasuring God will never interfere with loving our family, friends and neighbours, because that is what loving God looks like when put into action, but it will interfere with prioritising things, wealth, status objects, over people and our lives of faith. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also – God's truth and a clarion call to each of us today.