

## *An Extraordinary, Ordinary Life?*

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### AN EXTRAORDINARY VISION

The Bible, the story of God, begins with these extraordinarily powerful words: “In the beginning, God created!” These extraordinarily powerful words changed everything. These extraordinarily powerful words tell us about God’s heart. These extraordinarily powerful words tell us what was in God’s mind.

God himself, the all-powerful, all loving, almighty God, was wonderfully complete in himself. There was nothing God needed to make him happy or at peace or fulfilled. God was wonderfully complete in himself, Father God, Son and Holy Spirit.

In God there was always a moving of love from father to son, son to spirit, spirit to father. God himself had never known the anguish, distress, heartbreak, pain, grief or hurt of a broken relationship. God in himself had never known disappointment, loneliness, betrayal, injustice, frustration. God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were wonderfully complete, but God had something on his heart and on his mind.

The nature of love is to give, and God, wonderfully complete in love, wanted to give. God, wonderfully complete in love had something to share. God, in his wonderful love wanted to share that love and give that love...so, in the beginning God created. So that people like you and me could share and participate in God’s most wonderful love.

Truth is you have always been on God’s heart and in God’s mind – always! God, out of love, created a wonderful world in which we could participate with God. But love is a choice.

Adam and Eve made a choice – a choice not out of love but out of the pride of their hearts. A choice that wrecked everything! Sin still wrecks everything! God’s heart is broken.

Hear the cry of his heart as he searches for Adam and Eve as they hide themselves from his presence:

“Where are you?” (Genesis 3 v 9)

“What have you done?” (Genesis 3 v 13)

Adam and Eve, you and me, live in the consequences of not choosing love. But God, as he did in the beginning, still wants us to live in his bigger and better story. God’s love still gives, and the story of God in the Bible is the story of God reaching to his people so that they might live in his bigger and better story – the one he created them for!

We read the stories of God always moving towards his people: wooing them, helping them, rescuing them, choosing them, providing for them, sustaining them, protecting them, loving them.

We read the stories of people who always seem to move away from God, doing their own thing, in their own way, trying desperately to live well. We read the story of God constantly reminding his people that to live in his bigger and better story is simply the best way to live.

We read the stories of God desperately wanting his people to see that there is another story than the one they see in front of them – His story. We read the story of God’s heart of love, waiting, hoping, longing, forgiving, welcoming, leading, guiding. We read the story of God’s heart of love as he gives himself.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son.” (John 3 v 16)

He loves wonderfully. He gives magnificently. An Old Testament, very wise teacher said that the best way to live is to have God’s heart – to see the world the way God himself does. That, he said, is the best perspective to live in.

Jesus came and showed God’s heart, his father’s heart. He said: follow me for this is the best way to live. Jesus lived an extraordinary, ordinary life. He lived an extraordinary, ordinary life because he had his father’s heart and lived in his father’s bigger and better story. The best way to live is to follow Jesus, to live like him and to have a heart like his.

The teacher, the wise one, the one who tried an experiment with life and said live life backwards, pointed us to live in God’s bigger and better story. Jesus,

the great teacher, came as God's bigger and better story. He said: "My father loves you – and he loves you just the way you are."

He said: "When you flee or hide from God and you come back – you will be most welcome!"

He said: "It doesn't matter what you do, whether you ignore God, or despise him, or reject him or disobey him – he will love you just the same!"

He said: "It's not success, or riches, or accomplishments or faith that matters – it's your heart."

He said the best way to live is to have a heart like his, because when you have a heart like his you truly live in God's bigger and better story. You live, when you have a heart like his, as you were truly intended to live.

Jesus the great teacher said it this way: "I have come that you may have life in all its fullness." (John 10 v 10) So...the question the teacher asks is: "How's your heart?" You will know how much you live in God's bigger and better story by how your heart is.

So...how's your heart?

Just as he did "In the beginning" God's love, God's heart still reaches to you. God sees, just as he did "In the beginning" that sin still wreaks havoc, and God sees just what it does in you and me.

God loves us just the way we are, but his heart for us is that he doesn't want us to stay that way. His heart for us is to live more and more in God's bigger and better story.

Max Lucado has a really challenging thought. He asks this question: "What if, for one day, Jesus were to become you?"<sup>1</sup> Think about this for a moment: everything about you would be exactly the same. You would face the same situations, be in the same family, do the same job or the same things. You'd have the same talents, same abilities, same history, same body with the same physical health. It would be you with the same hopes, fears, worries and concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Lucado, M "Just Like Jesus," W Publishing Group 1998 page 1

There would only be one thing that would be different: you would be exactly the same person but with Jesus's heart. Jesus would live your life, but he would live it with his heart. What would you be like? Would anyone notice a change? How would you be different? How might Jesus's heart affect your moods, your temper, your stress levels, your sleep?

How might Jesus's heart affect what you are dreading? How might Jesus's heart affect the way you see your money or possessions, or career, or ambition? How might Jesus's heart affect how you view the future?

If Jesus lived in your body with his heart, how might it affect what's in your diary, who you spend your time with, where you choose to go and what you choose to do? If Jesus lived in your body with his heart how might it affect the people you know and love and spend time with? Would they notice a change, anything different?

If Jesus lived in your body with his heart would the poor notice anything, the outcast, the lonely, the unloved? It's certainly worth thinking about - don't you think?

God loves you just the way you are, but he loves you too much to leave you as you are! I love this story because it seems to me it captures what's at the very heart of God's heart.

*A Jewish couple had a son after many years of trying and he was a great joy for them! They named him Mordecai – but he became quite a challenge for them. They were pious Jews, yet Mordecai was a rambunctious, zestful boy who had a love of life. When he was old enough, his parents sent him to the synagogue to learn the word of God. They stressed to him how important it was to learn God's word and that without knowledge of it his life would be less.*

*He listened but the next day he never arrived at the synagogue instead he found himself in the woods, swimming in the lake, and climbing the trees. By the time he got home, news of his antics had spread all through the village, everyone knew of his shame. His parents were at a loss as to what to do. They called in an expert to modify Mordecai's behaviour. But the next day he found himself in the woods, swimming in the lake and climbing trees.*

*His parents grieved for their son and felt there was simply no hope for him. As*

*it happened the Great Rabbi was visiting the village and the parents of Mordecai went to him in desperation. They told him the story and the Rabi invited them to leave Mordecai with him. He said: "Leave him with me and I will have a talk with him." Unsure and ashamed, they left him with the Rabbi. Mordecai faced the great Rabbi trembling! He beckoned the boy to come to him, and then simply and gently picked him up and held him silently to his heart.*

*The next day Mordecai went to the synagogue, and when he had finished, went to the woods, swam in the lake and climbed the trees. Only this time as he walked in the woods, the word of God became one with the words of the woods, which became one with the words of Mordecai. And as he swam in the lake, the words of God became one with the words of the lake which became one with the words of Mordecai. And as he climbed the trees, the words of God became one with the words of the trees, which became one with the words of Mordecai. And Mordecai grew to become a great man.*

*People who were seized with panic came to him and found peace. People who were without anybody came to him and found communion. People who had no exits came to him and found a way out. And when people came to him he said, "I first learned the words of God when the Great Rabbi held me silently against his heart."*

God so longs for us to live in his bigger and much better story.

Do you see what this means – all those pioneers who blazed the way, all those veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running and never quit. No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished the race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed – that exhilarating finish is and with God – he could put up with anything along the way, cross, shame, whatever! (Hebrews 12 v 1-2The message)

To be held to the heart of God is to fix our eyes on Jesus and to learn from him. So in the days to come in this series, we're going to fix our eyes on the life of Jesus. We're going to study him and we're going to learn from him, but most of all, we're going to draw close to the heart of God through the greatest teacher.

And we are going to ask him to change our hearts!

Jesus heart was a forgiving heart

Jesus heart was a compassionate heart

Jesus heart was a listening heart

Jesus heart was an honest heart

Jesus heart was a pure heart

Jesus heart was a heart filled with hope

Jesus heart was a rejoicing heart

Jesus heart was an enduring heart.

The teacher wanted us to live wisely and well in the truth of God's bigger and better story and he chose his words carefully, and they were words of delight.

Jesus, the great teacher wants us to live life to the full, in the truth of God's bigger and better story that his death brings us life. He wants us to be drawn to God's heart because that is his heart... and when we live with his heart we can live life to the full. We can live as God intended.

So...Crawley Baptist church will be bursting with life? Life in God flows from the heart, so let your heart be held silently to the heart of God who loves you because he loves you because he loves you...and as you are held to his heart, his heart will become your heart.

As you fix your eyes on Jesus and become more like him,

Your heart will become a more forgiving heart

Your heart will become a more compassionate heart

Your heart will become a more listening heart

Your heart will become a more honest heart

Your heart will become a purer heart

Your heart will be more and more filled with hope

Your heart will be a more rejoicing heart

Your heart will be a more enduring heart.

Crawley Baptist Church will be bursting with life!

Amen.

Preached in Crawley Baptist Church on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2017, by Rev. Ian Phillips.