

AN EXTRAORDINARY, ORDINARY LIFE!

An Honest Heart

12 The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.

² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴ “Now a traveller came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

¹¹ “This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’”

¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."
(1 Samuel 1-13)

God sent Nathan to David to speak the truth. David had to hear the truth.

Lucy once said this to Charlie Brown: "The whole trouble with you is that you won't listen to what the trouble with you is!"

How's your heart this morning?

This talk is titled "An Honest Heart!" Seems to me then, that the best thing I can do, is to be honest. You may have picked up that the Deacons have been very kind and gracious to me in the past couple of weeks. Truth is I've got myself into a bit of a mess. I've done it for all the right reasons – and I've done it because, like you, I'm human and flawed. But what I've done is to work myself into the ground.

I've taken on things I shouldn't have; I've said yes when I probably should have said no; and I've forgotten to take any breaks or time off!! I got myself to a point where I knew it couldn't go on... but I carried on anyway trying to sustain it all. Then a couple of weeks ago I hit a wall!

Lisa spoke with the Deacons because I didn't want to. The Deacons immediately told me to take time off and rest. I am extremely grateful for their love and concern and for not telling me to "pull myself together" and get on with the job I'm paid for.

I'm also really grateful to Lisa, who had the courage to speak the truth that I didn't want to speak. I didn't want to speak it because I was terrified of becoming another failure in ministry! I think this is the thing I'm made for, so to mess it up is unthinkable. But I needed help...because what Lucy said to Charlie Brown, she could have said to me:

"The trouble with you Ian, is that you won't listen to what the trouble with you is!" I knew I was in trouble – I'd known for a little while, but I didn't want to listen to what the trouble with me was!

Three things:

First, thank you for loving me enough to tell me to take some time off over the summer.

Second, we all need a Nathan, or a Lisa, to speak truth into our lives – it's God's gift. Sometimes, though, God wants us to be a Nathan – to be the one who speaks his truth to another.

Third, we would do well to listen to what the trouble with us is, when God speaks.

So...what's the trouble with you? How's your heart? Perhaps, sometimes, the biggest challenge we face in having an honest heart, is being honest about ourselves.

How's your heart?

I'm going to pause and pray and I'm going to pray for two things:

1. Nathan: that if we are to be a Nathan, we will do it graciously, gently and with God's help.
2. Your heart: that you have the courage today to face the truth about your own heart.

Living an extraordinary, ordinary life most probably begins with an honest heart. It begins, perhaps, with knowing who I really am before God himself. So, being honest about your own heart means being honest before God in the truth of God's bigger and better story. So here's the truth about God's bigger and better story.

³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8 v 31-32)

When you live honestly in the truth of God's bigger and better story, the truth will set you free. When Jesus prays just before he goes to his crucifixion he reveals what is on his heart. His prayer is recorded in John 17:

17 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have

sent. ⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

⁶ “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

¹³ “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

²⁴ “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

²⁵ “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” (John 17 v 1-26)

It seems to me that the biggest thing Jesus wants for people – you and me – is to live in the same relationship with God as he did. It seems to me that’s what he prays for. He prays that we might enjoy God and the truth of God like he did. That it seems that is what he most wants – that’s the truth. He most wants us to see the world the way he saw it. He most wants us to understand the world the way he understood it. He most wants us to live in the real and vital truth of the kingdom of the heavens. He most wants us to live in the truth about God himself. He most wants us to know what he knows.

So what did Jesus know?

He knew he was greatly loved by his father. The truth about God is you are greatly loved by your heavenly father. Jesus knew that his father simply, could not love him more. The truth about God is he cannot love you more than he does. He cannot love you anymore today than he did yesterday and he cannot love you anymore tomorrow than he does right now. There is nothing you can do to make him love you more. There is nothing you can do to make him love you less. He loves you because he loves you because he loves you....

“The whole trouble with you is that you won’t listen to what the trouble with you is!”

An honest heart lives in the truth of God’s bigger and better story. How’s your heart?

Truth is, friends, we must open our hearts to God His great love for us! You cannot, simply cannot, save yourself! Jesus understood that we don’t want to listen to what the trouble with us is! He showed us that God’s love is so great – that he made a way for us to live in that love.

How's your heart?

Maybe, in truth, you know you've never opened your heart to God's immense love for you. God is present here, now, today – you can open your heart to him. He's waiting, longing, hoping, loving for you. How much do you live in the truth of God's love? Jesus said that when we live fully in the truth of God's love – it will set us free!

How free are you today?

Jesus said that when we live fully in the truth of God's love we have nothing to fear, or worry about, or beat ourselves up about. He said we'll be free from having to compare ourselves to others, or compete with them; we'll not have to spend our time trying to impress people or please them or avoid them.

Jesus said when we live in the truth of God's love we will know we are loved, cherished, good enough, accepted, just as we are... no strings attached.

How's your heart?

Maybe today you want to open your heart again to the truth of God's love and his bigger and better story.

I'm going to pause and pray for two things

1. Those who want to open their heart to God
2. Those who want to open their heart to the truth of how much they are loved by God right now.

Ananias and Sapphira:

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?"

What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

⁵When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. (Acts 5 v1-5)

The main point this tragic story teaches seems to me to be just how much God prizes truth. The choice Ananias and Sapphira made not to tell the truth revealed their hearts. An honest heart, one that lives fully in the truth of God’s great love, will tell the truth.

How’s your heart?

We might think that the consequences for Ananias and Sapphira were harsh. Perhaps the truth is they destroyed themselves. Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death. To not speak the truth is...sin! The wages of sin, friends, is still death – not perhaps death of the body... but what about:

A marriage: Lies that eat away at trust until it all comes crashing down.

A Conscience: The tragedy of the second lie is that it is always easier than the first.

A career: Trying to cover up mistakes; trying to take advantage of the company; Cheating in an exam!

Ourselves! How many of us, I wonder are destroying ourselves because we simply won’t accept the truth about our behaviour, or habits, our choices, our lifestyle, who we really are before God? How many, I wonder, worship outwardly, but our hearts are far from God.

Jeremiah tells the truth about our hearts. “The heart is deceitful above all things.”

Max Lucado tells this story:

Many years ago a man conned his way into the orchestra of the emperor of China although he could not play a note. Whenever the group practiced or performed, he would hold his flute against his lips, pretending to play but not making a sound. He received a modest salary and enjoyed a comfortable living.

Then one day the emperor requested a solo from each musician. The flutist got nervous. There wasn't enough time to learn the instrument. He pretended to be sick, but the royal physician wasn't fooled. On the day of his solo performance, the impostor took poison and killed himself. The explanation of his suicide led to a phrase that found its way into the English language. "He refused to face the music."¹

The cure for our hearts is simply to face the music. Here's a much better way of understanding the truth of that well known saying:
The cure to a heart that is deceitful above all things, is to open that heart to the love of the Father who loves you with his most magnificent love.
The cure for our hearts is to have an honest heart before God. Open your heart to Him and let Him love you with his great, immense and magnificent love. Then you will know more and more of the truth, and the truth will more and more set you free... free to live like God intended and to love like God intended. Then you will live more an extraordinary, ordinary life, more like Jesus did.

Preached in Crawley Baptist church on Sunday 18th June 2017, by Rev. I. Phillips

¹ Lucado, Max *"Just like Jesus,"* W Publishing Group, 1998 p 110/111