

Wesley United Methodist Church

August 7, 2016

“Where Is Your Heart?”

Luke 12:22-34

It's a classic children's story told time and time again. A little boy is asked by his Kindergarten teacher where his heart is. He points to the seat of his pants. “Why do you say that is where your heart is?” asks the teacher. “Because,” said the little boy, “My grandma is always patting me there and saying, ‘Bless your little heart.’”

There is no more relevant question that we can ask than this one: “Where is your heart?”

Some of you would say that your heart is with your family. And that's good. Our hearts ought to be with our families. They are our primary responsibility. We love our family. Of course, not every family is perfect.

I enjoyed reading the story of bank robber Dwayne Leroy Bodell in the newspapers August 12, 2000. Bodell has been in and out of prison since his twenties for various crimes, mostly bank robberies. At age 71, Bodell was finally set to be released from prison. Two weeks before his release date, he was allowed to leave his halfway house to attend a family reunion. Nice idea, right? The next weekend, Bodell tried to escape from the halfway house in a deliberate attempt to get put back in jail. He also robbed a bank in Knoxville, Tenn. He was easily traced to his place as the dye pack had exploded and he left his address in the get-away van. When they arrived at his address, he had washed the money in the wash machine and had it on the window sill to dry. Bodell's lawyer claims he wants to stay in jail so he can “have structure, no surprises and not to have to deal with family relationships.” He got his wish. Dwayne Leroy Bodell was sentenced to 3 ½ more years in prison. Family reunions can be a disaster, but that seems a little drastic to me. Family, though, is a central part of our lives.

Some of us will say it is with our country. And that, too, is good. We recognize that our country is not perfect. Still, we love our country. Some of us have had family members and friends who have died for our country. So when the flag is passing by or the national anthem is sung, we place our hand on our heart, for our heart is with this land. We cherish the freedom and the security and the opportunity that it provides.

Former U.C. Secretary of Education, Dr. William Bennett, was asked this question by a 7th grader: “How can you tell a good country from a bad one?” Secretary Bennett replied, “: I apply the ‘gate’ test. When the gates of a country are open, watch which way the people run. Do they run into the country or out of the country?” That's a pretty reliable test. Which way do people run? Our country has a lot more people trying to get in than get out. Our hearts are with our country. Where is your heart?

Some of you would say that your heart is in your work. Passion is the “in” word today. The key to success is to develop a passion for your job. That's not hard for some of us. We have the job we always wanted. For others, though, it's not so simple. Some of us work in dead-end jobs that we fear leaving because opportunities are limited and our responsibilities are great. And that's deadening to the spirit. When we put passion and desire into our jobs, no matter which job or how tedious, we will do our best to complete it.

What is it that you are passionate about? For some of us, passion may be reserved for a hobby or a sport. Joe Jacoby of the Washington Redskins was once quoted saying, “I'd run over my own mother to win the Super Bowl.” To which Matt Millen of the Oakland Raiders replied, “To win, I'd run over Joe's mom, too.” There is something about taking up a sport of any kind that brings out a radical level of commitment even when we are not very good at that sport. Baseball great Hank Aaron once said, “It took me seventeen years to get three thousand hits in baseball. I did it in one afternoon on the golf course.”

Some people are passionate about their golf game, others about football, baseball, hiking, dancing, or gardening. Some people in this worship service today will invest far more leisure time activities than they will ever give to the church. Where is your heart?

Jesus' teaching is very direct on this point, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” We know where Jesus' heart was. We see it exposed on the cross of Calvary. Jesus' heart was in doing the will of the One who sent him. Jesus' heart was in showing us how much we are loved. Such love and obedience gives us courage in difficult days. Such love compels us to be Christ-like toward all people. Such love reminds us to serve in humble adoration. We know where Jesus' heart was. And he said that is where our heart should be also.

So, where is your heart? Do you seek after God's kingdom? Does God reign in your life? Do you in all things seek the will of the One who created you, sustained you, loves you?