

Guilt & Innocence

Key Text

Mark 14:12-31 (ESV)

The Passover with the Disciples

¹² And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” ¹³ And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” ¹⁶ And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” ²⁰ He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, “This is my blood of the^[a] covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ ²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” ²⁹ Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” ³⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” ³¹ But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.

Introduction

Imagine walking into a mall. As you pass by a digital advertising display, you hear your name. The advertisement asks you how you enjoyed the jeans you recently purchased. Then, it suggests a shirt to go with them. The shirt is on sale—just \$19.99. This scene from a science-fiction movie is actually coming closer to reality.

NEC, a company that produces digital advertising signs, has tested facial recognition software in advertising. Instead of you looking at an ad, the ad looks at you. Cameras recognize you, identify you, and then analyze you as a consumer. By tapping into a database of your consumer habits, the display knows what you like and starts to show advertisements that appeal to you. Facial recognition helps advertisers connect to customers.

Facial recognition hasn't been used only to connect. It has also been used to protect. Law-enforcement agencies use facial recognition software to identify suspects in crimes. At the 2001 Super Bowl, high-tech facial-recognition cameras scanned the crowd for security threats.

Imagine what would happen, however, if there were another kind of software. A computer system that, instead of reading your face, read your heart. We could call it "heart-recognition software." What you were thinking and feeling at the moment would be transparent to the people around you.

Your daughter comes in the kitchen and asks what you think about her new boyfriend. You know, the one with the souped-up Camaro and the speakers that rattle the windows when he pulls in the driveway. You say, "I don't really know him that well." Her heart-recognition software tells her, "That's right, Mom really doesn't know him. But she already made up her mind." Or your son asks you what you think about him applying to a college halfway across the country. This time, you don't even get a word out before he knows your reply.

For now, I guess, we are safe. Technology can read our faces, but it is having a harder time with our hearts.

But not Jesus. Jesus doesn't even need to look at our faces. Jesus knows our hearts. Jesus knows that "the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). And he has come to do something about it.

Jesus has come to take away our guilt and to give us innocence. His innocence. That is the wonder that we will meditate upon today.

Getting to the Heart

If you have been reading along in the *Crucified. Glorified.* prayer journal, you will remember how last week's readings told us of two preparations: Judas preparing to betray Jesus and Jesus preparing to celebrate Passover with his disciples. God has woven these two things together: the betrayal of Jesus and the celebration of Passover. One reveals the hearts of humans and the other reveals the heart of God.

It is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the day when they sacrifice the Passover lamb. And the disciples have gone to prepare a place for Jesus to celebrate Passover. Mark tells us, "When it was evening, [Jesus] came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me'" (Mark 14:17–18).

Jesus has read their hearts. Jesus knows that Judas is going to betray him. What is interesting about this moment is the disciples' response. Mark tells us that all of the disciples ask Jesus the same question. The question is simply "Is it I?" (Mark 14:19). Notice that the disciples do not say to Jesus, "Who is it? Who is the one who is going to betray you?" or "How can we help?" Instead, they ask, "Is it I?" All of them ask Jesus the same question. Why?

Because the disciples know that the heart is a mysterious place. Even though they think that they would never betray Jesus, even though they are certain that Jesus will say, "No, it's not you," one can never really be sure with the heart.

Our hearts are a mystery to us. Why do we do the things we do?

You are driving to work, listening to Christian radio, when someone cuts you off in traffic. Suddenly, you become angry. One minute, you're

listening to songs about faith and the power of Jesus and the next minute you are adding your own nasty soundtrack to the playlist. Why? Because we cannot read our hearts.

You are sharing a prayer request with a friend at church—Sharon is having difficulty in her marriage. As you share the prayer request with a friend, you find yourself elaborating, adding your own opinion, diagnosing the situation, sharing speculations. Suddenly, something as beautiful as a prayer turns into ugly gossip. And the lips that are going to pray to the Lord are whispering half-truths about a friend. Why? Because we cannot read our hearts.

There are two verses that I want us to consider that expose the guilt of our hearts...

Genesis 8:21 (NIV)

²¹...every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

There are three ways that the heart tries to deceive us about our guilt

- 1. Denial – It's NOT me...**
- 2. Defense – I can do this... I will not fail**
- 3. Justification – I am right about this...**

Why do the disciples ask this question? Because they, like us, have hearts that are inclined to evil from their youth. Today, one by one, we could all stand before Jesus and ask, "Is it I?" because we know the power of sin and we confess that we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

What is beautiful about this moment at the Passover feast, however, is that it reveals more than our hearts. It also reveals the heart of God.

In the middle of this painful, heart-searching moment, Jesus tells his disciples, "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him" (Mark 14:21).

Jesus knows about our heart. He knows it is evil and that it will betray him. But he also knows the heart of God.

He was there in eternity when God chose to love his creation. He was there when Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden and God promised that he would send a Savior. He was there as that promise was taught and prayed among his people, preached and prophesied among the nations. And he is there now, living, breathing, dying, to make the promise come true. Jesus, the Son of Man, will die as it is written of him.

Jesus' death is that moment when we see the heart of God.

Jesus will take our guilt upon himself and offer us his innocence. He will bear the punishment of our sin that we might experience the joy of salvation.

For this reason, Jesus celebrates Passover. He takes the bread and the cup and speaks of his body and blood. He will be our Passover Lamb. His blood will be our protection, causing the angel of death to pass over us. His body will be our connection. Rising from the dead and giving us his innocence and new life.

Jesus will protect us from God's wrath and connect us to God's love that we might have a new heart to live for God.

Taking It Home

What does it mean to have a new heart?

It means that, as we look at the past, we will remember God's works. (not ours) Here, the psalmist David shares what it is like to give thanks to God: *I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.*

Psalm 9:1

Having a new heart means recounting God's wonderful deeds. Reading through Scripture and seeing God at work. Looking at your life and seeing God's mysterious grace. **Take a moment this week to recall the mercies of God. For every sin you recall, remember forgiveness. For every kindness you experience, give thanks for grace.**

A new heart also means that, as we look at the present, we will walk in the ways of God:

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Ezekiel 36:26–28

In this prophecy, Ezekiel foresees the day when God restores his people. On that day, God will put his Spirit in their hearts and that Spirit will lead them in the ways God desires them to go. So often we feel like we face the world alone. Jesus, however, has not left us alone. He has sent his Spirit to live within us and that Spirit empowers us to serve God and others in daily life.

With this new heart, we look to the future and we wait to see God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). By nature, none of us is pure in heart. Therefore, by nature, none of us would have this blessing. But we don’t live by nature. We live by grace. Christ has taken our guilt and given us innocence—his innocence. And now, in Christ, we stand pure in heart before God. There will come a day when the earth rolls up and heavens roll open, when Christ returns and brings about a new creation—we will see God!

On that day, we will stand before the throne. Our ears will ring with the songs of Zion. Our hearts will overflow with the love of God. And our eyes will be filled with a glorious vision. On that day, we will have one last moment of true facial recognition. We will see our Savior. Face-to-face. Protected by God for this moment, we will be connected to God for eternity.