

Can I give you some stats this evening?

I need ten people to come and stand here... You don't have to say anything I just need you as a visual aid.

.....

1 is from the USA-- 2 are European-- 1 is from South America-- 1 is African and the rest are Asian

3 represent Christian—2 Muslim—1 Buddha—1 Hindu—1 Ancient Religions—2 no Religion

3 can read and write—the rest are illiterate.

4 have a roof over their heads the rest are homeless or live in a cardboard shelter.

5 have enough to eat and 5 will go to bed hungry or starving.

The USA holds half the wealth of the world and the rest share the other half.

Those are some pretty shocking stats.

What kind of thoughts go through your head when you see these stats?

What happened to your heart when you see these stats? You want to know what happens to me? There's a part of my heart that cares. I feel bad for those who won't have a roof over their head tonight—I feel bad for those who will go to bed hungry or starving tonight.

But there's also a part of my heart that says, "I am so glad that I was born in the United States.

I don't consider myself wealthy, in fact I would consider myself on the lower end of the wealth scale. And yet the stats consider me one of the wealthiest people on the planet. The saying is: *If you have food in your fridge, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep you are richer than 75% of the world.*

When I am watching TV (by the way, only about 20% of the world's population own a TV) When I see starving kids or a feed the children program, you know what I do? I turn the channel. Or tune it out. I like watching James Robinson--"Life Today." He has some great Christian guests on his program, but the last half of the program is always about the needy. Whether it is providing meals or clean drinking water and I turn the channel. Mostly I turn the channel because the need is so overwhelming and I have so little to give.

I mean, I'm barely making it here. What Can I do. I feel bad that I don't have more to give and so I change the channel.

And then there's another thing that comes into play. We live in a world where there is such an abuse of "give away" programs and we have all heard that at least half and sometimes as much as 90% of donations goes into the pocket of some executive. And we have heard that the guy standing on the street corner with a sign that says, "will work for food...anything helps and God bless you.. That guy often makes much more than you do.

From my perspective, I sure can't save the world and if I do give, I want to think I'm contributing to a legitimate cause.

But God.... When God looks at the world, what does He see?..... I think He sees the stats. I think He sees all of it. I think He sees the child who will go to bed hungry and starving and I think He sees those of us who have plenty.And still are so needy.

WE in America hold 1/2 of the world's wealth. That's mind boggling to me!

That hurts my heart. Because the truth of the matter is I don't really care...because I have mine.

Tonight the theme of our service is, "Open my heart, Lord."

So far we had said, "open my eyes...open my hands...open my ears...and now open my heart."

What does that mean?

Long time ago, JUDSON W. VAN DEVENTER Wrote this song entitled Aa Heart Like Thine."

Give me a love that knows no ill
Give me the grace to do thy will
Pardon and cleanse this soul of mine
Give me a heart like Thine
CHORUS: Come to my soul blessed Jesus
Hear me Oh Savior Divine
Open the fountain and cleanse me
Give me a heart like Thine

Pillow my head upon Thy breast
Shelter my soul and give me rest
Fill me with love as I recline
Give me a heart like Thine
Only a joy, a few brief years
Only a dream, a well of tears
Vain is this world I now resign
Give me a heart like Thine
Open mine eyes that I may see
Show me the cross of Calvary
There may I go and not repine
Give me a heart like Thine

What Paul shares with us from his letter to the Corinthians which we read tonight, is astounding.

In essence he was saying, "If I have to go through hardship for you, I will. If it causes me calamities...beatings...imprisonment...hunger...sleepless nights...it's ok, I'd do that for you and for the sake of Christ.... I have that kind of heart for you...

Wow! How do you get a heart like that? How can I have that kind of heart?

Most of you know that my husband Don has a bad heart. His heart continues to deteriorate and the doctor's prognosis is not good. Don would like to be driving truck. He would love to have a pizza restaurant. He would love to do more.... But he can't. A bad heart keeps him from doing what he would like to do.

Guess what? It's true in the spiritual realm as well. A bad heart will keep you from loving like Christ loves. A bad

heart will cause you to turn inward rather than outward. A bad heart is not concerned about the physical or spiritual condition of another. You're ok that's all that matters. And so we close our hearts.

The writer of the book of Hebrews warns us... So, as the Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if you hear his voice,
⁸ do not harden your hearts

and then he gives them the illustration of when God led the Israelites out of Egypt and over and over again they rebelled and didn't believe God. Even though God sent them manna from heaven and water from a rock and their sandals did not wear out for forty years they grumbled and complained. Their hearts became hard. We go on to read in this chapter of Hebrews,

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. ¹⁵ As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.

None of us.... Not one of us would intentionally harden our heart...I honestly believe that...I don't think we want to be callous or uncaring. But every time we feel the nudging of the Holy Spirit and turn away, our hearts get a little colder.

What if...What if when you see that guy standing on the corner and you feel that nudging in your heart... what if it's not so much about him as it is about you?

The Bible tells us that if we give a cup of water in Jesus' name, it's the same as if we did it for Him. It doesn't say if you give a cup of water to the down and out.... It just says if you if you give a cup of water.

Maybe there's something else at work here. Maybe it is just to keep your heart open. Or who knows, maybe that person that you think doesn't need it is so discouraged and just needs to know that God cares..... I've been there, haven't you?

Just keep an open heart.

Have you ever left play dough out? If you didn't leave it out too long, you could still work it and work it until it becomes pliable again, but if it stays that was too long you just have to throw it out.

It's kinda like marriage.... you deal with issues as they come up and most times you can work it out ...sometimes things get at an impasse and you have to go see someone to help you work things out but if you let stuff fester and you shut down and he shuts down...sometimes it gets too far gone and the hardness of our hearts won't let us reconcile.

That's true of the Spiritual realm as well. Sometimes I get sideways with God and I start to do my own thing. One of the verses in scripture that bothers me is in

Matthew where Jesus is talking about end times and He says that in the last days....and I believe we are living in "last days" Jesus warns that in the last days the love of most...not a few...not many, but MOST will grow cold.

Oh God, keep my heart hot and wide open.

Don't harden your heart. Don't let your heart grow cold. I love what the scripture tells us in Ezekiel 11. God talking about these same Israelites who time and time walked away from Him says, ¹⁹ I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

Then He echoes it again in chapter 36.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Jeremiah tells us that the human heart is deceitfully wicked. That it's beyond cure...He asks the question Who can know it or who can understand it.

It's so easy to close our hearts.. Yesterday, Don had to go into town and I needed some alone time to work on this sermon. The house was quiet and I was getting

things done and I happen to look out the window and seen my grandson heading for my house. My initial reaction was oh no...there goes my quiet time. But deep in my heart I felt the holy Spirit say, "So what is your sermon about." Ouch! So I open my heart back up and met my grandson at the door and spent time with him... just playing games and letting him know he's important to me. God doesn't expect you to do what you can't.... He has placed you in a place He wants you. He knows where you live and the people you are in contact with...Open your heart to those around you and give what you Can give.

On our own...in our own strength, we can't change our hearts. But He can. And that's why our cry tonight is Open my heart, Lord.

Let my heart beat in tune with You...

Let my thoughts be Your thoughts. Let my desires be your desires. **put Your Spirit in me and move me to follow.**

Don't let your heart be hardened - don't let your love grow cold

May it always stay so childlike - may it never grow too old

Don't let your heart be hardened - may you always know the cure

Keep it broken before Jesus, keep it thankful, meek, and pure

May it always feel compassion - may it beat as one with
God's

May it never be contrary - may it never be at odds

May it always be forgiving - may it never know conceit

May it always be encouraged - may it never know defeat

May your heart be always open - never satisfied with
right

May your heart be filled with query and restrengthened
with all might