

This modern period in history has a serious heart problem. This is not just a metaphor but an actual medical reality. Heart diseases, troubles are very serious problems these days. The heart is a pump which supplies the whole body with oxygenated blood. We might also call it an “engine of life.” It is the only organ in our body which never rests during our entire lifetime but is always in action. And if the heart ever did rest, it would mean death for us. The heart is in our body, and it is for our body the same as God / Love is for the created world. This is the reason that the heart became a symbol of God, and the heart is also the place where God has His dwelling.

Our heart is not okay when it is not a dwelling place for Love. And this Love is God. We can tell that Jesus' humane heart is united with God's Word. And this is the secret of Love. It is the unity of two wills: the will of human beings and the will of God—to want the same thing. Our heart becomes sick when it does not work for its Creator. As God's word says: *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

What kind of treasure do you have? What is the most important, the most precious thing for you? What is the thing by which your heart is moved and becomes attracted? This world offers us many false and short-time pleasures, and our heart can be attracted to them. We have so many spots/advertisements which seem so convincing that people say, “Yeah, that seems good, I'm gonna to do that, or I must have that.” But what this world offers us is not everlasting. Everything is like grass or a flower which cannot always stay green and full of its beauty. But I believe that for everyone, the right treasure is our Lord Jesus Christ with His love and everything that he gives us.

In God's word, we have once again a parable about a vineyard, about the master of a house, and about tenants. The master of a house planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. But when the season of fruit drew near, and he wanted to receive the fruit of his vineyard, the tenants behaved in a very cruel manner. They killed every servant whom the householder had sent to them. Finally, he sent them his own son. This was an act of great patience and grace—for the landowner to send his son. Certainly, according to the law, he could have had the tenants punished severely for killing and stoning his servants. In fact, the patience of the landowner is quite absurd, isn't it? In spite of his patience and grace, the tenants also killed his own son. They wanted to own everything, but none of this belonged to them. Their hearts were blinded by property {possessions}.

How can anyone act in such a cruel way? How can anybody take and keep what does not belong to him?

It is a parable, so Jesus wants to say something to us through this parable. The owner of the vineyard is God, and the tenants are human beings. God entrusted the care of the land to a man to protect it from attacks, and God wanted to have a close relationship with him and with other people. But what did the man do? He not only abused the land and broke relationship with other people but he also broke relationship with God. He thought that he did not need God in order to live. The more the man thought he could do everything without God, the more he fell into the deep cave of darkness and corruption. He was so far down that it was impossible for him to come back.

And indeed, the patience of God is quite absurd in that He gives us the opportunity to repent which is far beyond what we deserve. His absurd patience is due to His great love for us and His desire that none of us perish. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Maybe it is hard for us to admit, but we, sisters and brothers in faith, we are the tenants. Many times, we ourselves are cruel and self-absorbed. We sent Jesus Christ to death. Because of our sins he died to keep our lives.

So God is sending us into the vineyard. He is sending us to work for Him and for His kingdom of heaven already here on earth. He gives us gifts and skills and sends us opportunities to serve Him and also other people. How do we use these gifts and skills? To what is our heart committed? Is it really for God that we use our gifts and skills, or is it for people—to let them know how good we are? To have a good reputation? To make a name for ourselves among others?

It is not a bad thing to confess our badness, but on the contrary, it is good to go to the bottom of our heart in order to test our heart and let God take care of it by healing it, changing it, and forming it. So, let us open our hearts to God and to other people. Let God lead us and form us according to His heart. Let God put His Holy Spirit into us. And let us ask God to give us a right relationship to everyone and everything.

God is manifested as our Father. No one is without His care. He wants to take care of us all. When we don't care about anyone, we don't have God's love in our heart. Then, we can pass by someone else without any remark, while being fully absorbed with/by ourselves and with/by our problems. But God is not able to pass by a person without something to say and without offering His attention. He loves us, and he takes care of us, and he is interested in our feelings and in our problems. God does not have his own problems. God has only our problems. God wants to appear Himself through our hearts so that we can also get in touch with Him through our relationships and friendships, and when we love each other. God is a personal and active revelation [?] of love, and He wants to, and can appear to us, especially in our relationships to others.

Maybe it seems difficult and hard for us to spread love to other people, but there is no other way to salvation except through love. When we purify our hearts from our every bad attitude, and when we allow God to act in us, then we can connect to God's amazing grace and love which created us, which saved us, and which blesses us. And maybe it is just one person whom we don't like very much, and maybe we even understand the reason why we don't like that person. But even this one unkindness is a barrier for spreading the Holy Spirit within us.

Therefore, look at our relationships, and look at our lives, and look at our relationship with God with a realistic point-of-view, without glamorizing it, and without excusing ourselves... What do we see?

So, put away your fear, maybe your carelessness, or your laziness, or your worry about unimportant things. Throw these away. Maybe you are waiting for better time? Throw these away, because the right time is now. Not tomorrow, not some day in the future, but now, today.

Put your pride in the trash along with waiting for a better time..., now it is just you and God, God who is looking for your open and honest heart without pretense. He loves us, and he wants to help us. Sometimes it takes a long time, sometimes it takes years and years, but finally we find out that the greatest barrier of God's blessings are not other people but we ourselves.

So don't be afraid to stop and ask God whether or not the way I am living is the right one. Whether I am doing what he wants from me, and whether I am following Him and the plans which He has made for me. So, we are still asking to commend ourselves to God's protection—to His hands—to put into His hands our every problem, our fears, our disappointments, our ambitions, our dreams. Put Jesus Christ behind the steering wheel and allow Him to drive and to lead your life.

I would like to finish this sermon with a brief story. In an African congregation, there was a basket for the offering in which people placed money which then was passed from one row of seats to another. In the last row of seats, there was a little boy who had nothing to place in the basket. So, he was very sad that he had nothing for the offering. And he was thinking what it might be that he could place in it. Finally, the basket came to him, and what the boy did was astonishing for everyone in the room. He said to himself, "I give to the Lord everything that I have." And he put himself in the basket.

It is the same with us: many times we are thinking what else there is that we can do as a sign of belonging to God. But the most important thing is to put our hearts into God's hands, and then, everything will go with our hearts. God wants us to give Him our whole heart again and again and again. Amen.