

WELCOME 17th February 2019 – 6 Epiphany '19 C

Luke 6:43-45 and Colossians 2:6-7

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! We are so glad you are here doing what we were made to do...offer God all that we are among his people... Please stay with us through to morning tea & beyond...all sorts of good things...

MRI, CT Scan, blood tests, bone density scan, mammogram, dental exam, x-ray, angiogram, ultrasound...and I haven't even broken a sweat...From the simple bathroom scale & tape measure to medical equipment costing millions we can physically assess, diagnose, prescribe, & treat almost every part of the human body.

But there is no scan swab or scope for your soul. We can't probe poke or pry and have someone determine the condition of our spirit.

Yet like all things living...even there you're either growing/thriving or withering/dying.

We know & the Bible agrees...we CAN however see indications of our spiritual health It's true physically & spiritually: there are always symptoms of health/sickness. Inner conditions give evidence in outer expression. *A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit.* Inner conditions give evidence in outer expression.

From the beginning of human existence to the last day of this earth, God's intention is that we bear his image, live in his presence & fulfil his purpose in the world. And like our physical selves, spiritually we either will do that well or less than well.

Just like how we tend/care for our bodies determines their health/vitality, how we nurture/grow/tend/care for our insides...our heart...our soul will have a great impact on how we engage with our world & the people, around us...How?

And now, just as you received Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Do you want your outsides to reflect your insides & have both be good, joyful hopeful, thankful? There's the way...Jesus lived/died/rose & rules to live in you & bring his life to reality through you...Life that reproduces love & joy & hope & thankfulness in everything you do.

We'll explore & experience that together today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Father, Open our hearts & spirits to hear your healing words of peace and love. Build our lives on the promise of life with you and according to your purpose unleash through us a river of life. Make us the people of service and justice that you have called us to be. Strengthen us as those who heal rather than harm; & serve rather than sever. Make us agents of blessing and great good, of love and powerful hope...we pray in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

6 EPIPHANY '19 C – WAYPOINTS: THE WAY OF GROWTH

FAITH CHAT: 1. Rate your physical fitness 1-10 - 1 ↓ 10 ↑ -How did you determine that? To improve?

2. What "data" would you use to rate your spiritual fitness? What would you score?

We are a society fascinated by transformation. From the sublime: home & garden reno shows, weight loss programs aplenty, health tests by mail...To the ridiculous: the Have you seen ___ lately? Where they find some former Hollywood child star A-lister & now they look like someone they found sleeping under a box on Martin Pl. or the Extreme Makeovers where they usually take a nice older lady & dress her in garbage sacks & style her hair with a firehose & live electrical current & then transform her with about \$5K worth of cut colour style make-up & clothes...and of course she looks fabulous...she's unrecognizable. Before/After...

We might say "a leopard can't change its spots" but we hope our love-handles, crow's feet & cholesterol are the exception to the rule...Remember...Australians spend over \$6 billion a year yes I said billion with a "B" on exercise programs, personal trainers, gym memberships, workout equipment, health improvement & weight control. You know the average useful duration of those memberships, equipment purchases, diets? < 6 WEEKS...Most experts say it takes at least 3-6 MONTHS to form new life habits & patterns Are we "successful" in our transformations? Mostly not. But the fact remains...We are fascinated by transformation...enamoured with the prospect of transformation.

SO...what does that say about our insides...I don't mean fat on our liver or glug in our arteries or gunk in our lungs...I love medical words! But what about the very core & essence of who we are...heart/soul/spirit? That part of us intrinsic to who we are that shapes our values our attitudes our beliefs & ultimately our behaviour our lives?

There's an old joke about the high school chemistry nerd who finally has the girl of his dreams working w/ him on a chemistry project. They are calculating the different elements that make up the human body. The young love interest reads the list one by one & the young science wiz notes them on a chalkboard & keeps a running tally of the percentages of the body that each element represents. There's hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, nitrogen, calcium, iron, sodium, & phosphorus & once they are totaled, they amount to a total of 99.888042% of the human body, leaving 0.111958% still unaccounted for. The girl surprises the boy by asking an intriguing question: "Is that part the soul?" to which he says, w/ a high school Cassanova glint in his eye, "The soul? Baby there's nothing here but chemistry." Yeah I know it's bad but it made its way into a hit TV series not that long ago.

We instinctively know we are more than a dog's breakfast of chemicals. We know at a deep deep level that we are more than hash of cells...100 trillion of them I hear Veins & vessels & bones & whatever other parts there are. We know we are more than our various parts & pieces...even more than the sum of our intellect/skills/experiences. But what is that? What are we...deep down...beyond & more than the material stuff of this life? And what are we to do with it...if it really is there & matters?

I want to start with where Jesus is in the text this morning & move from there...

"A good tree can't produce bad fruit, & a bad tree can't produce good fruit. A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, & grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, & an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart."

Seems to me there're 3 ways to hear that...1st you might hear an implied threat: *You can tell the tree from the fruit, so I'll be watching to see what kind of fruit you yield...and it BETTER BE GOOD!* 2nd you might hear that as an apathetic indifferent description: *Good people do good things, bad people do bad. What are you going to do?* 3rd I think you can hear that as a promise: *Good trees bear good fruit...and that's my plan for you!*

How do I hear that? Go back farther...From the beginning you & I are brought forth on this earth for this..."God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male & female he created them. Then God blessed them & said, 'Be fruitful & multiply. Fill the earth & govern it.'" Gen 1:27-28 God's intention is that we bear his image live in his presence & fulfil his purpose in the world...live responsive to him in relationship with him tending caring for nurturing our beautiful wild wonderful home & each other...That's never changed. God has not altered his intention for us one bit Ever. Even in our miserable failure to live that out God has not shifted his gaze from us his affection toward us or his plans for us. In Jesus Christ God comes personally to rescue & recreate us in his image for his purpose in that life together.

We look at the Son (Jesus) & see the God who cannot be seen. We look at the Son & see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above & below, visible & invisible...everything got started in him & finds its purpose in him. Col 1:16

It's in Christ that we find out who we are & what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ & got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything & everyone. Eph 1:11
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his plans for us. In Jesus Christ God comes personally to rescue & recreate us in his image for his purpose in that life together.

It's simple really...God has never given up on those whom he loves...created in love for his love...& in Jesus Christ perfectly reveals his image, presence, & purpose declaring by Christ's life/death/rez that God's rule over all things is a rule of grace mercy forgiveness restoration --- of its very essence: love that never lets go always redeems & has you/me/us/humanity as its objects at the centre of a new creation where all things are made new.

And if that's true...if you even have an inkling that that's true...that you can be are being re-made...being drawn deeper into a relationship you did not create on your own & that is making your life over again...then maybe those crazy "makeover" shows are telling us something about how we view our human existence: We want it to be better...newer...more beautiful...more satisfying...We live with the hope that what we are & have can be made new & wonderful & beautiful...mess & muck dealt with once & forever. That our relationships & aspirations & hopes & dreams & destinies & homes & families & communities can be more than one day after another until there are no more days...The good news is in Jesus Christ...it happens! Are we there yet? No... *I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers & sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past & looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race & receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. Php 3:12-14.*

The Bible says, our role now is to live that newness that is already ours in Jesus. Our call is to live the image of God we know in Jesus. *Now, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, & let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, & you will overflow with thankfulness.* To the church in Ephesus Paul wrote "...take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you." Eph 4:24 I love that last bit..."as God accurately reproduces his character in you."

Do you want your outsides to reflect your insides & have both be good, joyful hopeful, thankful? There's the way...Jesus lived/died/rose & rules to live in you & bring his life to reality through you...Life that reproduces love & joy & hope & thankfulness in everything you do. God in Jesus by the Spirit recreates us as he's always dreamed us to be: reflections of him. Bearers of his image, carriers of his presence & fulfillers of his kingdom's purpose in the world.

I don't know about you...but at 56/7 years old & counting...there's probably more days behind me than in front of me & I'm thinking about what I leave behind at the end of the next 55 years...I don't mean just my kids or my debts...but will we leave something here that lasts? What's the legacy you hope to leave be remembered for? There is a legacy you can leave that lasts forever. You can be an agent of God's grace...you can live life in Christ that lasts forever & engages the people around you in that eternal promise. Jesus reminds us..."*You didn't choose me, but I chose you. I have appointed you to go, to produce fruit that will last, & to ask the Father in my name to give you whatever you ask for.*" Jn 15:16. He chooses us to live lives so closely in tune with his that all we do reflects his power within us & his love & life working through us. He chooses us to make visible his powerful love & life-transforming grace here...now...in all we say & do...And THAT will leave an imprint on this world that cannot be erased.

Every one of us gets it: our physical/emotional health & wellness has an impact on the people around us. AND we get it that when we work to improve our health/fitness in those areas there are changes we need to make, old habits need to be shed, new skills learned...training regimen is not always easy & not always immediately clear how what we do helps...Spiritually...it's the same...It's harder in here...the flabbiness & out-of-shapeness is deeper & more tenacious...But never forget this is at heart a promise: *Good trees bear good fruit...and that's my plan for you!*

No matter what is happening, no matter how we might despair...how out of control we might feel...how tumbled & jumbled & stressed or distressed...God is in charge. God never gives up & never lets go & never stops loving you until His purposes & His will for you are accomplished. In spite of what we see with our eyes, or experience in our circumstances God is at work in & through us to transform us & then to use us to transform—remake—reshape the world in which we live. Jesus lived/died/rose & rules to live in you & bring his life to reality through you...Life that reproduces love & joy & hope & thankfulness in everything you do.

Let's pray with that in mind... ***Lord Jesus, Pour your Spirit into us and train us to be like you. Fill us with your Word and your presence and your power. Mould our hearts and lives to care for those around us in new and loving ways. Recreate us in your image so that everyone around us experiences your saving love in us. Amen***