

“There Will Your Heart Be Also”

Matthew 6:19-21

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I like to spend time with passionate people. And their passions don't have to be my passions. There's just something about the energy I associate with passion that draws me in. I would describe Jesus as a passionate human being. I am drawn to him.

Jesus was passionate about loving people who didn't realize they were loveable. Story after story, he seeks out the ones who were feeling rejected or feeling like a failure, or feeling like a square peg in a round hole. He had his antenna out for women and men and youth and children who had not yet made the discovery that they were loved. He was so passionate about this that he occasionally became exhausted by all the loving. He'd retreat to a place a part to regroup and to have some Sabbath rest. But, then he'd be back out there tracking down those who were broken by life.

I doubt that Jesus carried a checkbook. Probably didn't have a Visa card or a Discover card either. But, this past week, I was imagining that he did have a checkbook, and that he recorded each check he wrote in the register part of the checkbook. Don't tell him this, but I took a peek into that register part of his checkbook. I saw that the way he used his money reflected what burned in his heart.

Here's what I saw. He wrote a huge check to the boys and girls clubs of Jerusalem and Damascus! He knew that children and youth need all the affirmation they can get! His love for children and youth was boundless!

So, he invested some of his treasure in the kinds of programs that address the whole person: the body, the mind, and the spirit. When I saw that checkbook entry, I rejoiced that some of my own gift to my church accomplishes the same thing; says YES to the faith formation of our children and youth.

Then, I had a second look at that checkbook register. Jesus had written a whopping check to the Bethlehem Society of Lepers. He had this other-worldly passion for touching the lives of lepers; that is, the outcasts of his day, the pariahs. He saw that though men and women suffered miserably with leprosy, their disease mustn't be allowed to define them. Instead of seeing them as lepers to be avoided, he saw them as God's children waiting to be welcomed, to be embraced and cherished.

And I rejoiced that our Mission team is able to allocate thousands of dollars to our partners in Hartford and Haiti who are ministering unto underserved populations. I rejoiced that South Church is about to declare itself a W.I.S.E. church; open to and affirming of anyone with a mental challenge that isolates them from community life. I rejoiced that some of my own gifts to my church are reaching the people Jesus would be reaching out to today.

I'm sure you know I took a third look at Jesus' checkbook register. By the size of that third check, I could see Jesus was passionate about worship. When it was time to sing a hymn, he sang right out loud!

When it was time to open the Scriptures, he read with clarity and preached with compassion. When it was time to pray, he talked to God about his family and about peace and about justice.

And I found myself rejoicing that we, too, are passionate about our worship. We gather here to sing, and we sing our hearts out! We gather here to have an encounter with the Word, and we depart having been transformed by the Word. We gather to pray, and we have confidence God hears what's on our hearts. So, I was rejoicing that some of my own treasure supports what we do on Sunday mornings and at weddings and funerals and at those special events such as Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve candlelight and the Banner of the Saints.

So, you can see why I prefer hanging out with people like Jesus, with people who are passionate about doing God's work in the world. I'd be glad to share with anyone my own checkbook register. You'd see there that I am passionate about life at South Church; that I am passionate about life in Malawi; and that I am passionate about life on this planet, life in all its forms: from the tiniest lady bug to the grandest baobab tree.

When Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," he knew what he was talking about. I have taken these words into my soul. I invite you to do the same. For, the intersection of treasure and heart is the place of passion where we know we're living in the greatest of hope. Amen.