

The Hard Heart

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[0 : 00] Father, we confess before you that we are very good at seeing specks in other people's eyes and not very good at seeing logs in our own eyes.

We confess before you that we are very good at flattering ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin. And we are also very good at hanging on to the sins of others.

And Father, we confess before you as well that we can say this before you, but it's hard for us to recognize it when we're doing it. Lord, as we come to gather around your word, we ask that the Holy Spirit would move with might and power and deep conviction within each one of our hearts. Bring your word home to us. Deliver us from self-deception that we might no longer be deceived, but know the truth about you and about ourselves and about the world, and that we might live in truth and freedom to bring you glory.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Is it me or is my thing too close or is it just my... Everything's fine?

[1 : 07] Just my hearing which is going or something? Okay, well that's fine. There's all sorts of things breaking on me. So if hearing is just one more thing, that's just... That's life. Long...

Oh, I better turn on my timer. A long time ago, long, long, long time ago, I was actually... I was in graduate school for sociology, and sort of the area that I was best at, I took four graduate-level courses in statistics, and so I got hired by a couple of professors at the university to help them. They weren't as good with the statistical aspect of it, the statistical analysis of it, and so they hired me to help them because they were working on a project. And part of the project was about comparing government transfer payments or government programs where the government either adjusts taxes or gives you money and how that affected income inequality.

And they didn't just want to have a sense about how that was going on in Canada. They wanted to compare Canada to other advanced capitalist societies like Canada.

So, you know, Sweden and Norway and the United States and Great Britain and France and Japan, a variety of different countries were all in this, and I was doing the statistical, helping them with the statistical analysis.

[2 : 28] So we do the first run through the statistical analysis, and lo and behold, when we start to compare the different nations, the United States was in about the middle.

And now I'm telling you that because I found this profoundly disappointing and upsetting because going into it, I was convinced that the United States would be the worst because everybody knows that the United States, the American government, hates poor people, doesn't care about them, doesn't give them medical help, you know, and on and on and on.

And that's just where I... So we do the first run through the statistics, and it comes out the United States is about the middle. And I think that can't be right. That has to be wrong. So, you know, I'm clever enough with that type of stuff, and I, you know, I adjust some variables, and I look at different things, and I go deep diving into some of the other data, etc.

We rerun things after making some adjustments, and lo and behold, the United States is about the middle, not the bottom. Not even close to the bottom, about the middle. So I have a discussion with the professors.

We also say there's something must be not quite right about this data, and we have a bit of a discussion. I do some more models and everything. And at the end of it, the United States was about the middle.

[3 : 41] By the way, this isn't... I'm not leading up to a joke. I'm leading up to a confession. Because of this, I was just thinking, I'm going to tell you this story. It's about like I'm going to tell you a joke. But no, no, I'm not... I come up with a confession. So it's still in the middle, and I'm convinced that

this just can't be right because everybody knows that the American political system and cultural system isn't good for the poor.

And I'm just, you know, puzzled about it. Anyway, I'm a Christian, and the next day I'm doing my morning devotions. I'm reading my Bible and I'm praying. Now, if I was a charismatic, I'd tell you that God spoke to me.

But because I'm not a charismatic, I don't know what exactly I would say to you because probably the charismatics are right. But it was almost as if there was a visible voice, almost like not a visible voice. That would be weird. An audible voice that came to me that said, George, you hate Americans.

Now, me being a very devout Christian, as soon as I have this sense that God is almost speaking to me saying, George, you hate Americans, being a very devout Christian, I immediately argue with God.

In other words, I tell him that's not true. I don't hate Americans. I'm, you know, I'm all for justice. I'm all for equality. And I start to think of all these reasons why that can't possibly be true.

[5 : 00] But it was that sense that continued to be there. And I realized I hate Americans. It was very upsetting to realize that for who knows how many years in my life, I'd carried around this prejudice against Americans.

I mean, good grief, they'd never done anything against me even once. Only a few times I'd ever been to the United States. It was really, it was nice. I went to Cape Cod, you know, old Orchard Beach.

And here I am, I'm prejudiced. And that's what was happening with my study, is I wasn't actually interested in the truth. I wanted to do whatever I could to find them bad.

Now, I share this because what I'm describing is a human problem. And the Bible text that we're going to look at today addresses this human problem in a very, very interesting way.

So it would be a great help to me if you would open up your Bibles and turn to Mark chapter 3, verse 1 to 19. And let's look at these stories, especially the first one, but all three of them, as it speaks to this human problem of unrecognized prejudice or unrecognized hatred, or in fact what the Bible is going to call hardness of heart.

[6 : 23] And here's how it goes. Now, just sort of pause here for a second.

So they've gone to the synagogue on the Sabbath. So Jesus has gone there to worship. He's gone there to, in theory, that's why everybody has gone there. They've gone to be in God's presence, to hear the Torah, the Tanakh read, to hear it explained, to sing praises to God, to confess their sins, just to be in God's presence.

That's what they've gone to do. But actually, for some of the people who are there, they've gone to accuse Jesus. And the word accuse here is from the legal word.

They go to find evidence to find him guilty. They don't go to find evidence to try to figure out who he is and what he's doing. They have only one purpose, which is to find evidence that will get him in trouble.

And obviously, it's not trouble with the law in the sense of Rome. Rome couldn't care less what happens in the synagogue. But in terms of, you know, while Rome obviously had a huge intrusive presence, most of their daily life was ruled by the Jewish community.

[7 : 43] And that's the community that they wanted to get Jesus in trouble with. And what we see here, that here we are, they're all gathered in theory to worship, but inwardly, some of them are actually only there to get Jesus in trouble, is a very, very profoundly human problem.

If you think about it, how many churches in Alabama would have people singing how great thou art with their lips, but in their minds, they're planning the lynching after the church service.

Or that night. They're in church, hearing the Bible, singing God's praises, but really what's going on inside of them is planning the lynching.

We're very familiar, unfortunately, that some people, some Muslims, go to a mosque, and in the midst of their prayers, they're planning a terrorist attack.

It's not reported as much, but people can be in a Hindu temple in India, and they're planning some type of anti-Christian or anti-Muslim action later on that day or that week.

[8 : 53] Or to make it more secular, they're gathered for a rally to protect the pipelines and to protect the environment, but they urge the bombing of pipelines.

Oh, sorry, that one got cut out, didn't it, by the press? But, you know, it's an even deeper problem than that. It's easy to, and that's why I added the last one about the environment issue, because it's easy to say, yeah, yeah, that's the problem with religion, that's the problem, oh, one moment, that's the problem with caring for the environment.

But it's also a deeper problem than that. There's something about this which is very, very human, a deep human problem in another aspect. How many people have thought, how many couples have thought they're going to have a very, very pleasant romantic moment with the other person, and one of you is having a very romantic moment, but you can tell that the other person is, who knows, maybe they're even thinking about another woman or a man, maybe they're thinking about what they should do at work, or how much they hate their mother, or something that they want to do, or sports.

How many couples have had a conversation to discuss very, very deep issues, and at some point in time the woman realizes that the man is actually watching the television whenever she takes her eyes off of him, because he's watching the football game.

How many times have all of us dealt with people who are very nice to our face, but you know that inwardly, you find out later on, that they were very, very, very, very nice to your face, but they were actually thinking about how to ruin you.

[10:31] You see, on one level, the Bible is the most profound critique of religion all the time, but if we just think of it as purely a critique of religion, we're going to miss the fact, you see, that what happens is that religion doesn't solve the problem of the hardness of our heart.

As you think about these other times where you should be here for one purpose, a good purpose, like applauding or rewarding a good employee or a good boss, or you should be here for a romantic moment or for a good conversation, or to be concerned about the environment, but actually at the same time, underneath all of that, what's going on beneath the words is plans that go completely and utterly against the good purpose of the gathering.

So what will Jesus do? What is the insight that Jesus begins to give to this human problem, not just a religious problem? Well, let's continue reading.

Verse 3. And Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, Come here. And Jesus said to them, Now he's talking to the room, but he's not just talking to some of the people who don't know what's going on.

They're actually just there to hear the Torah read and to sing God's praises. But he, Jesus talks to those that there's this other thing going on in their hearts and their minds. Verse 4.

[11:51] He says, Is it lawful? And really when it says here lawful, we should really replace, I mean, lawful is the right word, but he's not talking about Roman law. He's talking about biblical. He's talking, Is it biblical?

Is it biblical on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill? But they were silent. And Jesus looked around at them with anger, grieved.

Notice this again. I'll read again verse 5. He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart. And he said to the man, Stretch out your hand.

And the man stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy Jesus.

What is hardness of heart? Well, hardness of heart is being closed off. Closed off from good things, because you're closed off from good things to pursue your own ego, to pursue your own pride, to pursue your own prejudice, to pursue your own racism, to pursue your greed, to pursue your lust, your envy.

[13:09] You're closed off. You're closed off from the kids that are right with you, having a family time, because even though you're with your children, for family time, in your mind, you're raging about your dad, or you're raging about your boss, or you're consumed with how you can get that promotion, or to make more money.

Hardness of heart is being closed off from good things, like intimacy and justice and love and truth, to be fixated on those wrong things that are grasping the heart.

And in our culture, echo chambers are hardness of heart magnified by social media and the press. Because when in doubt, you can always go to your favorite Twitter feed, or your Instagram feed, or your TikTok feed, or your YouTube channel, and you can fuel the hardness of your heart with many, many other people.

And part of the thing about the hardness of the heart is that not only does it close you off to the things like truth, and justice, and love, and compassion, and intimacy, but it makes you self-righteous.

I mean, those Pharisees in this particular story, they leave feeling virtuous. Let me tell you about myself.

[14:55] I felt very virtuous about my anti-Americanism. I wouldn't have said I was anti-American. I would have said I was prophetic. I would say that, unlike all these other benighted Christians, I was reading the book of Amos.

I was reading the book of Micah. I was reading Isaiah. I was listening to Jesus, and all these other people, completely and utterly opposed to this society, not opposed to this society to the south of me.

They're the ones who are living in illusion. They're the ones who have their eyes closed. I'm the one consumed with justice. I'm the one concerned for the poor, not recognizing that what I had was a great self-deception and self-blindness.

My hardness of heart made me more self-righteous, more claiming a higher purpose. And part of the hardness of the heart is shown here so powerfully just in this simple little story.

I mean, you think about it for a second. If Shane had the ability, God gave him the healing ability that you could come to him, and he would pray for you, and you have an arm which is bent, somehow or another deformed, and because it's deformed and connected with the deformity, I mean, I have skinny little wrists.

[16:25] I should have got a picture up there of the rock, his wrist or something like that, but, you know, some skinny little wrist that's just basically like two twigs, and there's no flesh to it whatsoever.

And could you just imagine that you're in a room, like you come here to worship the God who's the creator and sustainer of all of all things, and Jesus is there, and he performs a miracle, and you all know going in, because it's a small community.

Everybody knew Joseph or whatever his name. They don't tell you his name. I'm just picking a good Jewish name, Joseph. They all knew Joseph. They all knew that his arm was bent and twisted, that his hand would hardly work at all, and that there was absolutely no flesh there, and when he takes his arm out, good grief, the bones are straight, and there's muscle.

It would be as if all of a sudden Shane prayed, and my wrist looks like the rock's wrist, not like the wrist I'm stuck with. If Shane could do that, he could pay a thousand dollars.

People would pay thousands of dollars to watch it, and they're right there in the room, and that happens. In good grief, you'd think that they'd go, whoa, maybe I'm wrong about Jesus.

[17:35] Like, whoa. What's happening? Like, who is he? How could that happen? Like, that's mind-blowing to see something like that.

And yet, all they get as a result of that remarkable miracle is a deeper desire to destroy Jesus. You have a perfect picture of the hardness of the human heart. In fact, actually, it's even worse, because you see, normally the Herodians and the Pharisees were, in a sense, enemies.

Herod wasn't Jewish. The Pharisees were all about having the Jewish people follow the Jewish laws and the Jewish rules so that God would bless them. And Herod wasn't even Jewish.

And Herodians were basically Herod's cheering section. They were his spin doctors, his public proponents, the ones that said that, yea, Herod, yea, Herod, yea, Herod, Herod forever, Herod forever.

[18:39] And normally the Pharisees and the Herodians, and the Herodians didn't care a hoot about keeping the law, but what unites them is their dislike of Jesus. And that's what often happens with hardness of heart, is before we know it, we're eating bread, and we're fellowshiping with other people who share our hardness of heart.

Not a concern for truth, not a concern for justice, not a concern for the poor, not a concern for the oppressed, but they share our hardness of heart.

And all of a sudden, they look like we should be spending time together, and they never even stop to think about it. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, moment. I just saw a guy in the midst of worshipping God do this remarkable miracle, and here I am filled with anger, hanging out with people I don't even agree with.

What's wrong with me? And they can't see it. They can't see it. Now, there's other things.

I know I have to move on, but there's other things about this story which is just really incredible, if you think about it for a second. So one of the things, as we go on through Mark's Gospel, and as you read the other Gospels, one of the things that's very obvious about these ancient biographies of Jesus is the disciples did not think that Jesus would die upon the cross.

[19 : 58] Like, that's very, very obvious. It's one of the reasons why the historical record is actually in the direction, favors the belief that Jesus really, really would rise from the dead, because nobody who knew him actually thought he'd die, and when he did die, they were completely and utterly defeated, so they definitely didn't think that Jesus could ever die, and that if he did die, he'd rise from the dead.

They didn't think that at all. It wasn't part of how they understood the world. But if you think about it for a second, if Jesus could build muscle and straighten bones, he's like Deadpool without all the foul language and jokes.

He's like Wolverine, those of you who know the Marvel Universe. He's like those guys. And if you think about it for a second, if he's able to take a bone that's all bent and make it straight, and if he's able to take an arm with no muscle and all of a sudden give it muscle and make the things work, then he can break legs.

Like how could the soldier have ever hammered the nails into the hands and feet of Jesus if Jesus by the mere thought could break the soldier's hand and the next soldier's hand and the next soldier's hand until they all gave up?

You see, this is one of the things, as you're gripped with these stories about what Jesus does, it's one of the reasons why you can understand that that very old Christian saying that it was not the nails that held Jesus to the cross but his love for you that held him to the cross, that that must be true.

[21 : 36] That's the only explanation as to why he could actually die on a cross. He could just have had those nails, but he could have just did it as a big joke. Yeah, yeah, hang me up, and the next thing you know, the nails all just go out, his heels are going to his hand.

He could have done that. It was his love that held him to the cross, and it was his love that held him to the cross for the heart of heart. Some people get bothered by the fact that Jesus is angry.

In fact, I've talked to people who say that stories like this show the superiority of Buddha because Buddha, of course, would have taught us methods and techniques to not be angry.

Now, I'll share in a moment why anger is very problematic for us as human beings, but if you think about it for a second, people can be very, very, very anger-driven, and that's one of the reasons why anger is very...

Anger is a very, very, very difficult... Anger is a very, very difficult emotion and reaction to the world. But think about it for a second.

[22 : 43] If you've ever seen some of the film clips of what Martin Luther King went through in the 1960s, if you've seen him lead some of his peaceful marches, only to have him and his followers be struck down with water hoses and attacked by white police officers with big sticks and see him and his followers bludgeoned because they just wanted the end of racism and segregation, you would not think that the person in Alabama who was unmoved by that was morally superior.

You would say, how could any person not look at this and say this is deeply wrong? How could they not look at this and see anger?

How could they... Like, to show no anger at that is not a sign of moral superiority. It's a sign of something broken in you.

And the problem with anger is I might be feeling depressed about getting older. I might be feeling depressed about something about my finances.

I might be feeling depressed because I'm not getting the promotion I want or the job isn't going the way I want or I don't have this or I don't have that. But then I get angry. And when I get angry, those things that are making me depressed, they go away, they fly away, and I have this anger which I can ride.

[24 : 26] And anger makes me tower over the others. It makes me feel like a god. It overwhelms my feelings of inadequacy, my depression, my shame with this anger.

And I can be convinced that I am right. And that is why anger is such a hard thing for human beings. To not experience anger at things which are truly wrong and unjust and unloving is a problem.

But it is too hard for us with our anger to just be angry in a way that reflects our justice, a sense of justice and love and compassion and what is good and right in the world without it quickly turning into something which is in fact very, very bad for us and very wrong.

But what we see in Jesus is we do not see an anger-driven man. In fact, we see the exact opposite. You see, because anger, before it goes off the rails, before we start choosing anger and nurturing anger and becoming more and more and more and more and more angry and more and more self-righteous and more and more in our high horse.

But when we begin that little opening moment of the proper anger, of a great injustice, a great cruelty which is done and we realize that it's unjust, it's unloving, it's not good, it's not compassionate and we recognize that and part of the recognition is anger.

[26 : 02] Just saying it that way, you see that it's connected to justice, it's connected to love. And so what we see here in this story, because it's setting up the end of the story, by setting up the end of the story, we see that Jesus says, how can you be here singing how great thou art with your lips, but in your hearts you're trying to kill me?

That just saddens me and it makes me angry at the injustice. But because it emerges out of love and a concern for justice, it does not lead him to obliterating his enemies, but to dying on the cross for the heart of heart.

You see here the complete and utter opposite of anger driven. But as he is connected to that which is good and just and right and compassionate, it realizes that you and I cannot fix the hardness of our hearts by ourselves, so we need a savior.

We do not need the Buddha to teach us how to not be angry. We need to recognize that we have a problem and we need a savior. The next story is going to show us just to start to wind this down. The next story is going to show us, in fact, the next two stories are going to show us the hope that we have, but also the fear, the temptation that we have, the fear that we have and the hope that actually Jesus provides us.

[27 : 43] Let's look at verse 7 and we begin to see here in this a bad temptation and a deep fear and it's the final story that points us in the direction of hope.

Look at verse 7. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea and a great crowd followed him from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Edomia and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon.

Just sort of pause there. What this is showing is that Jesus' fame is expanding very, very far and it's going both to areas which are basically almost like 98% Jewish to areas that are sort of like 50-50 Jewish Christian and Jewish pagan and even to areas where there would have been very few Jewish people that was overwhelmingly pagan and his fame is expanding in this large area.

Continuing on in verse 8, when the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him and he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd lest they crush him for he had healed many so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.

Now, in the original language, there's a sense to all of this that it can't really be communicated into English and in that original sense which is there is that this is actually a bit of a threat to Jesus.

[29 : 04] The crushing him is a threat. The pressing in on him is a type of grasping. You see, what they want is in a sense that part of the heart which is still hard, it's not there's so much a hardness of a heart, but there's still at the connect of the heart this pride and this desire, this, you know what it is?

It's a gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme. It's not praise you, Jesus, take me. It's not falling flat on the face in acknowledgement of one who is greater than us.

The temptation is to see the Jesus and the power of Jesus and go like this. Gimme, gimme, gimme. Gimme, gimme, gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Not even go in here and take out my wallet and give for the kingdom.

But gimme, gimme, gimme so I can put it in my pocket and my power can grow. I can tell stories. People will buy me wine for decades when I tell them the stories I saw about Jesus.

And here's the fear. Look at verse 11. And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, you are the son of God. And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

[30 : 27] Verse 11 again. This verse is very, very, very literal. Sometimes the very literal can confuse us. I use the ESV when I'm preaching because it's closest to the most literal translation that one of the most literal translations you can get.

But what it's describing is that human beings have been possessed by a demon. For those of you who are in the Marvel, I think it's the Marvel Universe, think of Venom that's taken over Tom Hardy. only once again without the jokes. And these men and women who are demonized, who a demon or demons have come into them and controlled him, control them now, the spirits see Jesus and they throw their host down and have the host cry out, you are the son of God.

And Jesus strictly ordered them not to make him known because he doesn't need demons. Even if demons say true things about Jesus, they'll do it in a way that after just this one brief word, it will be a lie, it will hurt, it will lead you away.

You don't get the testimony of demons. But here's the fear. Remember, I don't recognize the hardness of my heart and part of what happens for me is that there's this natural part of human beings that have a fear about letting Jesus, letting the true God in.

[32 : 01] Like, part of us don't want to lose our self-deception because if we lose our self-deception and we actually see the world as it really is, as we see the triune God as he really is, and if we get close to him, he'll hurt us, he'll possess us.

But you see, this fear that we will be possessed by Jesus, that we will be possessed by the Holy Spirit, that all of a sudden the triune God will so come into us, how can he not come into us in such a way that he will completely and utterly overwhelm us and take us over?

What we're actually afraid of is demons, not Jesus. I mean, because you look at that, that's the thing which is so important about the Bible is that it's demons that come in and take us over.

It's demons that do things to us to tell us lies and encourage us in self-deception. I'm sorry I yelled too loud and I woke up the baby. I just, I don't plan to do this. You know, I just get up here and who knows what.

Anyway, there you go. But you see, really, if you look at the Gospels, what happens is you come close to Jesus, he heals the withered hand. What happens when he meets the demon possessed is the demons are cast out and people are free.

[33 : 11] What happens is you get closer to Jesus is you get closer to love, you get closer to justice, you get closer to truth, you get farther away from us versus them, your racism and your prejudice is attacked, your lust begins to try to be quieted, you're making an idol out of alcohol or money or something like that begins to be challenged and broken down and what happens when you come close to Jesus is that Jesus died for you and I to be free.

It's idols and demons that bind us and control us. and bend us out of shape. It's Jesus who takes our disfigured, misfigured, muscle-less arm and makes it straight and gives it muscle.

That's what Jesus does. And here's the hope. See, so George, are you saying that, you know, you Christians have less hardness of heart than others?

No, I am not saying that. Remember my story at the beginning. I've been Christian for quite a few years and the hardness of my heart towards Americans I hadn't even recognized. I'm not saying anything like that.

George, are you saying that if you sort of read the Bible and come to sermons and, you know, listen to your brilliant preaching and because you're such a brilliant preacher that, you know, people will go away and their hearts will be a little bit less hard and, you know, and, no, no, that's not, here's the Christian hope.

[34 : 45] You see, if the first story talks about this double mystery, the mystery of the fact that, you know, that the Pharisees and Herodians are planning to destroy Jesus, they can't really destroy him if he has the power that it is.

It's pointing to this mystery of his upcoming death and the fact that his death, it's only going to be his love that holds them to the cross. Well, look what happens here, verse 13, and he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired and they came to him.

In the original language, this is very formal, solemn language. It's a solemn language. And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired and they came to him.

And it's talking about the fact that in other places in the New Testament you'd find out that Jesus had lots more disciples than the twelve. Mary Magdalene was a disciple. Joseph, Jose was a disciple.

Matthias was a disciple. He had many, many disciples, but out of these many disciples he goes to the mountain and verse 14, he appointed twelve whom he also named apostles so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.

[36 : 03] He appointed the twelve, Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, the sons of thunder, Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James, the son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Another implication of the coming death that he's going to have on the cross. But here's the hope. And in the original language in verse 14 when it says he appointed twelve and then again in verse 16 he appointed the twelve.

In verse 14 when it says he appointed, that's a good word in English but the problem is the original language, you can't translate the original language in a way that makes grammatical sense in English without adding a lot of extra words.

And the actual literal word is and he make, he made, he made twelve. Same in verse 16 he made the twelve.

And if you go back and you read Genesis chapter 1 when the Jewish text was translated into Greek the same word made is there when it said and God made the heavens and the earth.

[37 : 25] When God made the night and the day God made the sun and the stars God made human beings. That word made is the same word here that's translated as appointed because he made twelve doesn't really make sense in English so they use the word appointed but this word is made.

And if you look at verse 14 again and he made apostles he made them so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.

He makes them first. You see this is what's saying what the Bible is saying this is the wonderful thing about the gospel is that Jesus he's angered at our hardness of heart it grieves him but he doesn't let the anger he never becomes anger driven the anger is connected to that which anger should be connected we can't keep connected to that because we build it up we flame it up and anger quickly leads us to no longer being just to no longer being compassionate to no longer being loving to no longer caring but he it doesn't drive that with Jesus it's connected to his love it's connected to his justice it's connected to mercy it's connected to compassion and so he's going to die upon the cross and when he dies upon the cross he is doing something for us as human beings that we cannot do for ourselves and when we receive Christ he makes us a Christian he makes us right with God you see it's not okay my heart's a little bit less hard as a result of this sermon and next week it's a little bit less hard and then it's a little bit less hard and finally my heart becomes so soft that I get awarded being a Christian it's the opposite the work of grace is that God makes you and me with our hard hearts his out of grace by what he did for us on the cross and then we become we become because we're made by him first we don't become we don't just sort of keep becoming until we achieve he makes us and then we become look at verse 14 he appointed the 12 whom he also named apostles and he gives two purposes that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons he makes us unworthy as we are to be his and he makes us unworthy as we are to be his so that we will spend time with Jesus and as we spend time with Jesus that the Lord begins to reveal to us prejudice and racism and a hard heart towards the poor and greed and an idolatry of money or an idolatry of ourselves or pride or selfishness and because he makes us his and we spend time with him he begins to confront these things in us and to change these things within us within the context that everything that we needed to do to be made right with God was done by Jesus he knows everything about our heart so we can look at ourselves without becoming thinking oh my if God knew that about me he wouldn't no no he did know that about you when he died for you and that as we get closer to Jesus and you look at there's another place later on where I'll talk about this other purpose what is the purpose as we spend time with him because he's made us him that we will bear witness to Jesus and that we will be against evil in whatever form whether it's spiritual evil which has to be exercised whether it's institutional evil it leads to great injustice or any type of institutional wrongdoing against the poor or others we are against it we're against the evil and the idolatry of greed and gluttony and other things which bend human beings out of shape and break them that we are against it and that we are for healing to bring the healing to the city to bring healing to people to bring healing to our country he makes us and he makes us and we are to spend time with him to be with him if you're watching this if you haven't given your life to Christ if you're here and you haven't given your life to Christ this is the time to give your life to Christ call out to him

and say Lord I need you to be my savior and for those of us who are here who have done that you don't have to give your life to Christ again he already took it it's a time for us to remember it is good to be here and to recommit to this to recommit to be Lord in your presence that we might go from here and we might deal with whether it's demonic evil or institutional evil or social evil or cultural evil or intellectual evil that we will be against it that we will be for the health of our community and our society and our nation and the world we will be for this we will be against evil it is good to be here to reconnect to remember Lord is it me show me the hardness of my heart grant me help that I might repent of that hardness of my heart that that might not control me that I not be controlled and have my eyes and my heart and my ears blinded to the not just to good to that which is good and just and true and right but the beauty of the world and the beauty in human beings that those things of my heart that are hard that make me bent and shriveled and less than human

Lord show me those things in your mercy that I might repent of them that I might know your freedom I invite you to stand please stand let's bow our heads in prayer Father we thank you for Jesus we ask Lord that your word would so work and move within us and Father not that we be blind to evil or definitely not that Father that we see evil clearly that we see evil clearly and Father it grants us both a proper anger that doesn't become controlling but a desire Father to see justice and goodness done that you'd show us and reveal to us the hardness of our heart the blindness that we have Father show that to us and as you show it to us remember help us to remember Jesus and the gospel that we might come to you for amendment of life for healing for restoration for renewal [44 : 16] Father Father you know in this room the different ethical and other issues that people here face whether it's in government or in our neighborhoods or our business and Father we ask for each one of us that you help us to bear witness to Jesus and also Father be a source and an agent of healing of reconciliation of compassion of right ordering in those places that you have put us and help us to be people of prayer we ask all these things in the name of Jesus your son and our savior and all God's people said amen amen