

An Affair of the Heart

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[0 : 00] I thank you friend Olaf for your smooth and gentle introduction.

Yes, I am an enthusiast for Lerner's Exchange, as you rightly said. And I think you all of you will know by now that I am an enthusiast for the prayer book as well.

And the prayer book is to be our focus of interest this morning. And you saw the rather catchy way in which Bill had rejigged my title for this morning's talk.

It's up on the notice out in the foyer. A Fair of the Heart. And you ask, what a fair is that? And the answer is true religion, as the prayer book presents it, inculcates it, and challenges us to maintain it.

A Fair of the Heart. A Fair of the Heart. Yes. Let me introduce what I have to say by telling you some of the other reasons why I'm an enthusiast for the prayer book.

[1 : 26] I'm just recapping things that I believe you will have heard me say from time to time in earlier talks, but they form the proper background, I think, to what I'm going to say today.

I will have told you in the past that I didn't always enthuse about the prayer book as I do now. When I was young, before the good Lord broke into my life, I was taken to church Sunday by Sunday.

We went through the prayer book services. It was mechanical, and it was meaningless as far as I was concerned. Just something that you did without thinking in the way that you clean your teeth.

When I found myself a new creature in Christ, well, I was all froth and bubble, as young Christians tend to be.

And I was a little irritated by the prayer book. I thought it was stained and stiff and cool to the point of being chilling.

[2 : 42] But that just reflects, as I now see, the fact that in those days I was all froth and bubble, as I said. And now I trust I've gone beyond the froth and bubble stage.

And I do profess I love the prayer book because it does point me and sustain me in the direction of what I now recognize as real religion.

It seems quite simply right at every point. You say, what do you mean by right? Well, four things quickly.

It centers on the Bible. It exhibits Christian worship first to last as a response to biblical revelation.

Faithfully heard and digested and then reproduced. And that I believe is how it will be.

[3 : 49] The prayer book centers on God. And in a culture like ours, which centers so passionately and exclusively on the man, you know, human life, human well-being, human wellness, and so on and so forth.

These are the centers of modern cultural concern at any rate here in Vancouver. A prayer book that centers so robustly on God is a boon at such times.

And the prayer book centers on the right things about God, His grace and His glory. And then thirdly, and my last remark leads into this, the prayer book centers on the gospel.

I'm sure all of you have heard me say that Cranmer skillfully discerned how to build the gospel into services of worship.

Or putting it the other way around, how to build services of worship that would express and enforce the gospel. He did the job with really stunning simplicity by juxtaposing three themes in order.

[5 : 08] The theme of sin detected. Grace proclaimed. And faith exercised.

It's wonderfully Christ-centered. It's wonderfully heartwarming. It's wonderfully clear. Wonderfully strong. And just the way it seems to me that Christian worship ought to be.

Gospel-centered in that way. And finally, the prayer book seems to be so right. Because it centers on holiness as the goal of human life down here.

Our secular culture, and I'm afraid a lot of popular Christianity having been infected with the secular culture, tells us that human happiness is the center.

The big thing which we should be focusing on all the time and that Christian worship should lead to. The prayer book doesn't actually deny that. But it does affirm that holiness is the purpose of God for human life.

[6 : 24] There is indeed peace, joy, and fulfillment in the life of holiness. But it isn't a life of comfort and ease and being able to avoid life's difficult decisions or anything like that.

You wouldn't call it a happiness culture then. And when culture does focus on happiness, it seems to me, culture is stepping out of true.

And when the prayer book continues to center on holiness, then you have things as God means them to be.

In Christian worship and in Christian life. Last time I spoke on the prayer book, I think I stressed the fact that Cranmer builds the theme of repentance into his services.

Very strongly and all across the board in terms of sin and grace and faith. Repentance in a real sense was at the heart of Cranmer's theology.

[7 : 36] And the life of repentance and good works is something that, as you know, surely, runs all the way through the collects, the collects that are set for the 52 weeks of the calendar year, thus turning them into a Christian year simply by the centrality of this theme.

Quite apart from the other sense in which a Christian year is a reality as you go through the seasons from Advent to Pentecost and Trinity Sunday.

In all these ways, I now see the prayer book as fundamentally ever so right. And it feeds my soul.

It does mean good. It refreshes me to repeat the sermons, the services over and over, Lord's Day by Lord's Day.

And to dip into the prayer book to help my own devotions during the week. And what am I to say?

[8 : 49] Here is where my anchor is now cast and here is where I hope to stay as long as life in this world continues for me. So, all of that I bring with me to the study of this further topic, which I think in terms of my addresses on the prayer book is a new one.

I don't think you will have heard of this before. I don't think you will have heard me speak of this before. The prayer book presentation of religion as the opposite of formality, as an affair of the heart, as a way of living in which God works on our inside.

And our Christian life is an expression of the life that he gives us. And that life, as you see, is expressing itself from the inside out.

Now that's the Bible perspective. There have been those who have thought that the way to secure godly worship is to concentrate on externals and hope, indeed expect, that the affair of the heart will develop from the outside in.

Of course, at the surface level, that's often the sequence because other people like myself go through prayer book services and find that there are really meaningless formalities to you.

[10 : 29] And that's because you, yourself, aren't spiritually alive yet. And then when you come to spiritual life, well, everything is different. But real spiritual life, I say again, works, expresses itself from the inside out.

And when we think about real Christianity, we should always have that perspective in mind. Well, what we're going to see in detail, actually, is that the prayer book takes us along that path.

You can see, perhaps, that being taken along this path saves us from a whole lot of mistakes.

Yes, I said the prayer book is Bible-centered. And if it wasn't, it would be man-centered. It would be religion built on human ideas and them alone.

You heard me say that the prayer book centers on God. And if it didn't, well, it would certainly center on making people feel happy in the way that I've suggested is not actually God's primary purpose in this life.

[11 : 50] And if the prayer book wasn't centered on the gospel, well, again, it would be... I don't know what, something dreadful is happening. Yes, it is. My nose is beginning to bleed.

What does a man do in a situation like that? Pinch it. Pinch it. Well, yes. Let me try pinching it with the handkerchief.

And see, this is not very good for him. Do you think that would help? I think it's in a second. All right, let's sit down and see the difference. All right.

Let's see the difference. Just for clarity, folks, can you hear me?

Yes. When I talk in this curious pose. Yes. No question. It's just possible, you see, that even Satan might not want this talk to finish.

[13 : 05] And I would like to thwart him, if that's the right way to see it. And I can thwart him. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm just doing the best I can.

If my voice becomes indistinct, would people at the back please yell? Because I've got plenty of decibels. All right.

Well, here we go. Here we continue. Anyway, where'd I got to? Yes, I was saying, or preparing to say, that I see one of the...

That would be an improvement. Let's see what happens. I'm still going strong, I think.

But, yes, I shall talk more clearly, certainly, with one of these paper tissues. All right. Back to where we were. I was about to say...

[14 : 15] Someone's for you, please. One of the... Yes. I'm trying to do something, how could I say, something rhetorical. The prayer book is right about God, right about the Bible, right about the Gospel, right about holiness, and it's right also.

This is what I'm trying to say. It's right also about the inwardness of real religion. And we do so affirm that, and we go on from there.

I want you now to see this in the prayer book. Yeah, here we are. In the prayer book, by following with me some of the ways in which the noun heart, and the adverb heartily, and the adjective hearty, are actually used in the prayers.

It wouldn't be true to say that heart is a technical term in the prayer book. Not as such. It's a word that is regularly used in the scriptures, I don't know how many hundred times altogether.

It's used in a meaning which isn't matched in other non-biblical cultures. The word heart becomes systematically ambiguous in scripture, because though the word original signifies the pump that sets blood around the body, it also is used, and used more often than in the physical meaning, it's also used for, well...

[16:10] You've got some tissues? Yes, I have to say, I need some more, yes. This is wonderful. Once again, my rhetoric is the...

Disrupted, let's... You are so kind folks, I do appreciate it. Does Will Johnson go to the 9 o'clock circus?

Who? With John? Perhaps. Yeah, because Christine's just gone to see... Yes. Well... Gosh, I don't know that he could do very much for me, but...

Well, yes, he turned me to lie down, and though I can spout to a group like you, sitting up, I honestly couldn't do it lying down.

So, if that was what Will wished upon me, that would be the end of the gathering. Well, now I'm going to... What was I trying to do?

[17:09] I'm trying to say that in scripture, the word heart is used very much in a distinctive way, which has come to be part of the language of our...

Well, of all cultures that depend on the Bible. The distinctive way is this. Heart is used for the very core and centre of the person.

The real you. The essence of you, or of me. The true person, as distinct from all the masks that we wear, and all the misperceptions of ourselves that we encourage.

Indeed, it's the real you in contrast to the ideas that we regularly have about ourselves. It's the... The heart is the real you that God sees, God knows, and God deals with.

And it's the view of the human individual which reflects the fact that we were made in the image of God. God made us for himself.

[18:35] And so it's not surprising that the human individual, you and I, we have what, in St. John's language, we can call the central focus. And the central focus is the heart.

And we shall see it from the Bible in a few minutes, that out of the heart come the issues of life, on the Bible view. All the thoughts and words and deeds that you and I, what do you do, commit, produce, express, they all come out of the heart.

We don't have direct access to our heart except insofar as we deserve what we're thinking, what we're desiring, what we're saying, what we're doing.

We look at ourselves, we stand back and look at ourselves, the Bible calls it self-examination. And so we begin to get an idea of what's in our heart, just because it's out of our heart that all of this, all of this personal life of ours has come.

Well, the Bible, sorry, the prayer book, which is echoing Scripture all the way and responding to Bible teaching at every point.

[19:57] The prayer book picks this up, and so the many uses of the word heart in the prayer book reflect what you've got in Scripture itself as the word is used in this world.

Perhaps it's worth pausing for a moment to say that this unitary view of the human individual, you and me, as having a central focus, a central core, a heart, out of which all our thoughts, words, and works come, out of which desires emerge, out of which all the impulses and inclinations of our daily life are coming.

This idea is quite in contrast to the way that the human individual has been thought about by the thought leaders of the 20th century.

Freud, I think, I think, has done more than anyone else to shape the 20th century way of thinking about the human individual.

And Freud, you perhaps know, thought of the human individual as fundamentally dissociated. He talked about the id, well, it's a sort of bubbling pot of desires that go in all directions.

[21 : 33] There it is, it's unintegrated, unfocused, the id is blind. But then, looking at, how can I say, controlling the id, or trying to, is the ego, that's the personal self, deciding what to do about the desires and impulses and so on that one is conscious of.

And then Freud added the thought of there being the super-ego, that's the conscious, which tells the ego what's acceptable and what isn't.

And you can picture this rather quaintly in terms of someone living on the first floor of the building. The id is downstairs in the cellar, hammering on the ceiling.

Let me out, or let us out. Let us come out and express ourselves. This is all the confused desires which make up the id.

But the super-ego is hammering on the ceiling, saying, now, some of those desires must not be let out. And so you've got this Freudian concept of the ego pushed from pillar to post by the urges of the id and the prohibitions of the super-ego.

[23 : 03] And so you have the ego under strain. And so you have all sorts of mental and nervous troubles, dissociations, disorders, so on and so forth.

And that's the view of man with which Freud opened the door, as he did, to the 20th century therapeutic way of thinking about the human individual.

A therapeutic way which seems to be regularly to work on some version of the Freudian idea. Well, whatever else one says about the Freudian idea, it's a picture of the dissociated individual.

Isn't it? Now, the Bible has a thought of its own, a teaching of its own, about human life being, yes, dissociated because of rebellion against God.

If the human individual isn't focused on God, which is an integrative focus, pulling you all together, you see, in the long service of God, well, then immediately you begin to come apart.

[24 : 22] And the rebellion of sin produces immediately lives which have come apart. Lives in which, to this extent, just as Freud pictured it, you've got a whole lot of irrational ideas pulling you all over the place.

But the Bible diagnosis is very different from Freud's diagnosis. Freud says, well, this is the ultimate human condition. This is just the way we are.

And there's, you can't say there's anything wrong with it. You can only say it's a condition that has, out of which we've got to make the best we can of our lives.

Christianity says it is radically wrong. It's the fruit of rebellion. And if God renews the heart, renovates the heart, regenerates the heart, renews the heart, as by grace does in Christ, well, then the life will be turned round and integration of the disordered self will begin.

And the integration will be centered upon a life, a life, a mind, a person, given to what we were made for.

[25 : 48] That is, response to God in worship, in praise, and living to His glory in seeking to exalt Him and please Him in everything that we do.

And so, the reintegration of the self, that will be perfect in heaven, begins here, in the process called sanctification.

But Freud knows nothing about any of that, and neither does the modern secular world. Well, alright, that's an excursus of the biblical concept of the heart.

Now, with that in our minds, let me remind you of some of the things that we find in our prayer book. So, morning prayer.

Morning prayer. With a pure heart and humble voice, approach the throne of the heavenly grace and confess your sins.

[26 : 51] Remember? Right at the beginning. Right at the beginning of the sins. And then, where do we go from there? We go to the...

Well, eventually we get to the... I'm sorry, just for a moment. Just for a moment, the word is lost. Let me find it. We go to the... We go to the...

What's called the lesser litany, where we pray, Oh God, make clean our heart within us. And then we get to the general thanksgiving.

And we give God hearty thanks for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. And we pray that our hearts may be unfaithfully thankful, that we shall show forth our praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives.

Well, that's morning prayer. But that... You can almost say like Al Jolson used to say 70 years ago, You ain't seen nothing yet.

[28 : 02] That's nothing as compared with the prominence of the heart in the communion service. Just think, the opening calling, Cleanse our hearts.

That's what we're praying for in the opening calling. Cleanse our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, That we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name, Both in this service and in the whole of our lives.

The next thing that happens is that we hear the two great commandments. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, Is the way that the first begins.

Heart you see is inclusive. It means with all your powers. It goes on to say that actually, With all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.

Soul in the Bible is virtually a synonym for heart, not quite, but nearly. And then we respond to that by praying that God will write these two commandments, Have mercy on us, and write these commandments in our heart.

[29 : 21] Yes, in our heart. So by now, we're only three or four minutes into the service, But by now we know already that the communion service is centered on the heart.

Yes, indeed it is, and don't we go. We very soon find ourselves, We find ourselves called to hearty repentance and true faith.

Hearty repentance is repentance from the heart, that is, from the very core and center of your being, As distinct from just going through the motions of abandoning one line of action or embracing another.

As I said, heart religion works from the inside out. And the communion service maintains that perspective. Okay.

Hearty repentance then is what's called for. Hearty repentance and true faith. Hearty repentance and true faith. And we find ourselves later on in the service, Praying that God will enable us to lift up our heart.

[30 : 51] Heart. See, the very center of your personal self. May we be totally involved in praise.

And then right at the end of the service, The peace of God is prayed for, that we may enjoy it. Peace of God, which passes all understanding, Keep your hearts.

Yes. Keep your hearts in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. You see, the perspective of the communion service is the heart-centered perspective right the way through.

You've got this thought of true religion as heart religion, Breaking surface over and over again in the colleagues.

I'm not going to turn them up in detail. I was going to, but it would involve work with the right hand, Which the right hand is not free to do.

[31 : 58] So I'll simply make reference to what's here. In the collect for New Year's Day, the circumcision of our Lord, We pray that we may mortify our hearts.

In the collect for Quiggesima, as Lent approaches, We pray that we may...

I have a minute. In addition to having a bleeding nose, I have a bit of trouble with my eyes these days after peering, excuse me.

Oh yes, we pray that God will pour into our hearts that blessed, most blessed gift of charity or love.

That thought incidentally comes back in the collect for Trinity 6, 6th Sunday after Trinity, Pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love.

[33 : 01] When you get to the 4th Sunday after Easter, The collect... I thought I'd written this down in large enough letters for me to read it properly.

Yes. Easter 4, We pray that our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found. You know these words, of course.

You've heard these collects over and over. But then when you get to Ascension Day, The collect prays that in heart and mind, We may thither ascend, That is to the place where Christ himself was gone, To now to be seated of the right hand of the Father, May we in heart and mind thither ascend, And with him, In fellowship with Christ, Continually dwell.

In heart. Well, you see these phrases, they're wonderfully rich. And I would like to expand on them.

Time doesn't allow me to do that. Third Sunday after Trinity, We count to God as those to whom thou hast given a hearty desire to pray.

[34 : 25] Now that you know is a good test of whether a person is really born again. Have they a hearty desire to pray? Have you and I a hearty desire to pray?

It's a haughty question. And Trinity 19 is a sort of oddly a gatherer, comprehensive prayer, That God the Holy Spirit will in all things direct and rule our heart.

Well, is this evidence enough to satisfy you that prayer book religion is essentially an affair of the heart? That the focus of the heart?

That the focus of the heart runs right the way through? That there's no place for formalism or formality, which doesn't go any further than the externals?

There's no place for hypocrisy, which seeks to hide both from men and from God, what you and I really are.

[35 : 37] No, no. Prayer book religion is honest religion. It's the religion of openness to God, the God who knows and searches the heart.

I was going to... Well, yes, I've got time I could do this. I shall round this off by this presentation off then by going back to scripture and answering some basic questions to which the prayer book is assuming the answer.

I'm just making the answer explicit. Some basic questions about the religion of the heart. I've already asked and answered the question, what is the heart in scripture?

The heart is the real self, the real you. I now ask a further question. What... What...

What... What a minute, just... Oops. Somehow I've lost myself. I don't know quite how. A further question... I found myself again, don't worry.

[36 : 49] I'm sorry, I'm a little bit disoriented. I can't disguise it. With your sympathy, I'll get there in the end.

The second question. How does God relate to the heart? Question one, what is the heart? Question two, how does God relate to it?

The answer, basically, is that he does two things, both of which I've mentioned already, so I don't need to spend a lot of time on them.

He reads the heart. There's some very telling things in scripture along this line.

Jeremiah 17 verses 9 and 10, for instance, presents us with the question that Jeremiah sets himself and he gives the answer.

[37 : 54] The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked or desperately sick. Either translation is possible.

The question, who can know it? We can't know our own hearts, alone and unaided. The answer is, I, says the Lord, I try the hearts.

I search the hearts. I know what's in man. And then, in Psalm 139, same perspective, you could say.

The psalmist, having brooded on the way that God is everywhere, searches him completely, knows everything about him.

He brings it all down to the prayer, familiar prayer, of course, the prayer with which the psalm closes. Search me, O God. Try the ground of my heart.

[38 : 58] That is, look into my heart in its very depths. You know, you will know who I am then better than I know myself.

See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Search me, O God. Search me, O God. Try my heart, and let me know anything that needs to be changed, that I may follow, find and follow the way everlasting.

Yes, God reads the heart. And, second thing, God renews the heart. It's put that way explicitly in one of Ezekiel's prophecies, and I do want to try and read this.

Here we are. Having made reference to the fact that Israel hardened their heart against God, and dishonored him by the lives they live, God knows this.

And I will give you a new heart. I will put a new spirit within you. I will put a heart of flesh in place of the heart of stone, and will cause you to keep my commandments and do them.

[40 : 32] That's Ezekiel chapter 36 verses 25 and 26. And so, in the New Testament, you find that the work of God begins in the heart.

It's a work of renovation. I've said it already. It's a work of regeneration and sanctification. It's a work that makes the heart new.

It begins, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6, When God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness in creation, shines in our hearts.

Know these words? Shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And when that happens, one becomes a new creature in Christ.

In the next chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul actually says this. If anyone is in Christ, oh yes, in Christ by faith.

[41 : 44] In Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit given to those who put faith in Christ. In Christ through union. If anyone is in Christ, well, says Paul, he is, or there is, you can translate it either way, a new creation.

Creation. Yes. God creates a new heart. It seems to me that just as we think of the creation of God causing the world to exist out of nothing, So we should think of God creating, that is, exerting power to bring into reality something that simply didn't exist before, and can't be explained in terms of anything that went before.

God creates a new heart. God creates a new person. God creates a new creation. Well, Paul says, is actually speaking very strongly as you can see.

If anyone is in Christ, well, the Greek is actually an exclamation. If anyone is in Christ, no verb, new creation!

Exclamation point. Theor is, he is a new creation. A new creation. Well, that's God beginning to renew the heart.

[43 : 15] And there are other passing references in the New Testament to the work of God renewing the heart. Now, a third question of the final question.

You see, what God does with the heart, I now ask, how are we to relate to God from the heart?

Or, putting it the other way, how are our hearts called to relate to God? Well, the answer again can be given, I think, in two words.

It's the heart, the inner core of the person, that receives and ever must receive the Word of God.

And it's the heart, the inner core of the person, that must respond to the Word of God. This gets us back to where we started, as you can see.

[44 : 17] Because, until God renews the heart, this quality of response from the very core of your being can't happen.

But, when God enlightens the heart and draws you to faith in Christ, and the new creation happens, well, then it is possible, and God the Holy Spirit, in dwelling us, actually brings it about, that we respond to God from the heart, in the way that the prayer book is modelling from start to finish.

See? The, again, there are plenty of places in the New Testament where the fact that our response to the Gospel, and to God, must be from the heart.

That that's expressed simply by the word heart appearing in the sentence. For instance, Romans chapter 6 and verse 17.

You were the servants of sin, yes, and that led only to unrighteousness. But, God be thanked, that though you were the servants of sin, you have obeyed from the heart, the form of teaching that was given you.

[45 : 40] And so, being set free from sin, you're a new creation now, being set free from sin, you became servants of righteousness. Which is the way the new heart is.

It's a heart for God. It's a heart for godliness. It means that godliness is now, that is, fellowship with God, service of God, praise of God, enjoying God's fellowship, and doing God's will.

That's what, most of all, you want to do. From the new heart comes the dominant desire. Get it? From the heart you obeyed the form of doctrine to which you were delivered, and being set free from sin, you became servants of righteousness.

In Ephesians chapter 6, verse 6, there's a passing reference to serving God from the heart, which is the only real way to do it. And back in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 19, we are told, rather strikingly, to sing as we go in the Christian life, making melody with songs, spiritual songs, making melody to the Lord in our hearts.

In other words, singing to the Lord because we want to sing to the Lord. Why do we want to sing to the Lord? Because our gratitude to Him and our joy in Him is overflowing.

- [47 : 22] That's why people sing. Well, says Paul, that's going to be a natural expression of your Christian life. It's part of your response to the Lord who loves you and to save you.
- Well, now I draw to a close. Richard Baxter, my Puritan mentor, once said, Heart work and heaven work make up real Christianity.
- By heaven work, what he meant was the cultivating of a strong hope of glory. By heart work, what he meant was, well actually three things together.
- Self-examination in the presence of God. Self-examination that begins with asking God to examine me. Search me, prove the ground of my heart.
- See if there be any wicked way in me. Show me if there is. And lead me in the way everlasting. With self-examination, must go self-presentation.
- [48 : 35] This is the language now of Romans 6. Present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead. And your limbs, your powers as instruments of righteousness.
- Present yourself in that way to God for his service, you see. That's the second dimension of heart work. Self-examination, self-presentation.
- And then thirdly, self-exertion. In this connection, I would quote Paul's frequent picturings of Christian life as like the exertions of the athlete.
- Remember? He does it quite often. Like the exertions of the athlete who is straining, entraining, and then straining in the race in order to gain the prize.
- Exert yourself. Exercise yourself for godliness, says Paul to Timothy. And implicitly he's saying to all the Christians to whom he writes his letters.
- [49 : 54] So think in terms of self-examination, self-presentation, and self-exertion, as the three basic expressions of the renewed Christian heart according to the New Testament.
- This, in other words, is the formula for healthy, lively, God-honoring, and so far as it goes, happiness bringing godliness in this life of others.
- That's the pattern of response to which the prayer book calls us constantly. The prayer book follows the scriptures in this.
- And to have a prayer book which does call us constantly to this quality of response to God from our regenerate hearts.
- Well, this is a great blessing. A blessing that we should appreciate. And it seems to me that all of us will benefit if from time to time we use the prayer book in our private devotions, as well as in our public worship, in order to remind ourselves that this, in terms of the basics, is what Christianity is all about.
- [51 : 39] Well, that's the celebration of the prayer book presentation of Christianity as an Affair of the Heart that I wanted to lay before you.
- Time has gone. That's coming up to ten. We have a little time for discussion. And I am content to go on holding my nose for a discussion period, if you are content to sit there and watch me going on doing it.
- And I am happy to ask you, as we have a short time of dialogue, as we have the children coming in like a hungry herd of elephants in a few minutes.
- So, we don't want to really yelling at us again, as she did last week. So, a short exchange, I think.
- Okay. Yes? A few weeks ago someone mentioned a title of a book which was a small, simple commentary on the prayer book.
- [52 : 50] Could someone remind me what that title of that book was? Oh, the author was Sue Careless. And the book is titled...

Gosh, it's gone for me now. I think it's Understanding the Prayer Book. Okay. If you contact Regent College Bookstore, they will certainly set you right.

Sue Careless. Sue Careless. Okay. It's a curious name, and it's a name that sticks with you. I think it's Understanding the Prayer Book. It's all I remember, but it was a curious name.

Yeah, well... Okay, I recommend it very highly. Thank you. When you get the book, you'll see that my recommendation is plastered over it. Dr. Perkins, sorry, just to comment about your nose, you might want to take that off now.

You've held it long enough, and you may find it's settled down as long as you don't blow it. I think it'll be more comfortable that way. Dr. Err, was that a question?

[54 : 00] No, no, no, no. Dr. Paul Coates, sorry, sorry. Dr. Well, alright, thanks. Okay. It normally doesn't take too long to sit.

Dr. Paul Coates, sorry. Dr. Well... Dr. Just don't blow it. Dr. Thank you, friend. Thank you, friend. Yes, I understand the formula.

I'm curious, this is the third time that I've been coming up to public discourse, you know, and as I start, my nose starts weeping in this way.

If that makes me sound as if I'm on my last legs, I'd better tell you that this is the third of the three times, and I suppose the first was fifteen years ago.

I don't make a habit of it, at least not yet. But, yes, I'm so grateful you made that remark. I'm holding my tissue at the ready, but it is more comfortable. You're perfectly correct.

[55 : 18] Anyone want to say anything more about the religion of the heart? Anything like that? Yes. I would be interested in, Ken, knowing how you use this in your devotion.

Well, there are passages, there are individual passages in the prayer book to which I revert.

The general confession is one that I use over and over again. I'm a sinner and I need to find words to say so. The te diem is something that I use over and over again.

I am called to praise God and I want to praise God. And the te diem, which is, as being described as the creed turned into a hymn, the te diem is really very magnificent as a voicing of praise.

I am called to praise God and I am called to praise God and I am called to praise God.

[56 : 32] And my heart warms to the te diem, as I said. I use it over and over again. The individual collects and phrases from the collects help me a lot.

Just as I find that when I'm stuck in prayer, praying through the Lord's Prayer and amplifying each petition, well, each bit of it, because of course the first half of it isn't a petition in the way that the second half is.

The first half is essentially saying, glory be to you, Lord. It's more praise than it is prayer. Thy will be done as it is in heaven.

But using the Lord's Prayer anyway and amplifying each clause, I find, how can I say, unblocks the channels and sets me going again.

I don't use whole services in my personal devotions, although the prayer book directs clergy, frankly, to do that.

[57 : 46] But I think I cover the substance of the services, reading the Bible the way I do, which is, I think I've told you this, I follow the one-year Bible.

I believe that the good and healthy and practicable thing for Christians is to read the whole Bible once a year. And I think that the one-year Bible, which Tyndale House produced using the New Living translation, is the best way of dividing up the Bible for readings 365 days of the year that has yet been produced.

It's a hunk of Old Testament, a hunk of New Testament, a psalm, and a bit of the Proverbs. Long before the living Bible... sorry, long before the one-year Bible was invented, I know that Billy Graham used to read the Bible this way.

Some Old Testament, some New Testament, a psalm, and a bit of the Proverbs. Well, those are the surface-level things. Those are the things that I regularly revert to.

And reading the Psalms this way, you go through the Psalter every year, I confess I don't read all the Psalms for the day in the prayer book, I just haven't time.

[59 : 22] Because, I don't know about you, but for me, you read the Bible slowly, because you have to think about what's being said each time.

And you know that the Psalter is set in the prayer book in a way that gives you about forty verses in the morning and forty verses in the evening.

And to think about all those verses as you read them takes time. So, for me, my psalm reading is quality, at least attempts to be quality rather than quantity.

I don't make any rules for anyone else. As a matter of fact, in the Anglican Agenda series, there's a very good book by our own Nora Johnson called Taking the Church Year Seriously, which leads you into using a morning or evening prayer day by day.

And, okay, if you find that the most helpful thing to do in your devotional time, you do it. I've rambled a bit, but is that enough of an answer to make you happy?

[60 : 44] At least until next week. If I could follow up on a comment. I came out of a tradition where we had a book, and they call it the manual.

And it's very difficult for me to take on anything other than the scripture because in that tradition, it was the manual that was given high life over scripture.

And so, I found it's very difficult to link on to another text and elevate it.

Well, please God, it will always be at St. John's and throughout a renewed Anglican Communion, the Bible first, and the prayer book as a model response to the Bible to get us further into the Bible, which is really the way that our prayer book is.

Huge hunks of the Bible are set for reading in order to get us further into the Bible. But, when it comes to private devotion, the thing to do is find out what works for you, what makes your heart freest in the Lord's presence, and your fellowship closest with Him.

[62 : 06] And you can't make rules any more than you can make rules as to how people make love to each other. I'm not being privileged when I say that. I'm saying something that, to me, is a very profound fact about human life.

Okay? Any more from any more? I was curious if you could speak for a moment about the relationship of the heart and the mind, because if we, if the heart is the center, and we learn according to our affections, and yet our mind directs our heart in some way, where is the beginning place for that, and how do we approach that?

Well, the heart is an inclusive concept in Scripture, and it does actually include the mind, just as it includes the affections or emotions, or, well, whatever you want to call them.

In the Bible, words are not used with exact definition, and most of them have a measure of, I was going to, I don't say fuzz, but openness around the edges, so that they operate a little bit like a concertina or an accordion.

Sometimes the word is used more narrowly, as if, like the accordion closed, you see, and sometimes used more expansively, the accordion open.

[63 : 43] Sometimes the heart clearly expresses mind, and affections, and emotions, and all that we think of as belonging to our soul and our spirit.

It expresses all these things in terms of their origin. They all come out of the heart. So the heart is, is where all mental activity is rooted.

Does that mean that the mind, that the heart is something other than the mind leading? No, because God reveals truth to the heart through the mind, which receives what's said in scripture, what's said in sermons, what's read in books, and so on.

The mind receives, and the mind is an aspect, at this point becomes an aspect of the heart. If the heart is unregenerate, the mind doesn't like what it's getting from God.

If the heart is regenerate, the mind loves what it's getting from God. Reads, marks, learns, and inwardly digests, and is very happy to do so.

[65 : 08] But really, the mind and the heart are fused at that point. The mind is, say it this way, the mind is now the label for the intellectual aspect of the working of the heart.

There's no sort of antithesis between heart and mind in scripture, whatever may be the case in modern culture.

The heart includes or involves the mind, say it involves every other expression of the self.

And you don't get any distance by saying which comes first. Any more than you do if you ask the same question in relation to faith and the regeneration of the heart, or the new creation, the renewal of the heart.

Truth is that two things come together and they're inseparably fused. It's a conjunction which we ought to recognise and be thankful for.

[66 : 21] I may be confusing you, but I hope I'm helping. I'm telling you the way that I've come to see it through such digging in this matter as I've done.

Bill, I think, wants to call us to a halt. Yes, I think you've done so well and I'm amazed that you've done this part. So thanks so much, Dr. Petra.

A bit of a Dunkirk for you, just a bloody nose, you know. Yes, yes. And all it was then and all it is now. So thanks so much.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Here you are.