

All Your Heart

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 0 0] Well, we'll turn back together for a short while to Proverbs chapter 3 and as I said, we're going to focus especially on the words of verse 5, but we'll read verses 5 and 6 just now.

Proverbs chapter 3 verse 5 to 6, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.

These are two of the most famous verses in Proverbs, possibly even in the whole Bible. And for anyone who's not read Proverbs before, it's a fascinating book, almost all of it is made up of short poetic statements that we call Proverbs that outline what true wisdom looks like.

And one of the reasons it's a wonderful book is because we live in a world that is full of crazy and foolish behavior and in that world this book quenches our thirst for a better way to live and a better way to think.

Verses 5 and 6 are crucial because they are a wonderful reminder that the key to life is not to trust ourselves, it's to trust God.

[1 : 2 0] In fact, that statement before you there in verse 5 is showing us what it is that makes Christianity so different to the mindset of the culture around us because these verses are telling us that we are not going to find peace or wholeness or ultimate answers by looking within ourselves.

That's an article of faith to the culture around us that if you want answers, if you want peace, if you want fulfillment, look within. That's where you'll find it.

Christianity says the opposite. Christianity recognizes that if we look within, we actually just find a bit of a mess.

That's what I find when I look within and I am only going to find peace and wholeness and security when I turn my eyes from myself and trust the Lord.

Ultimately that's pointing us to Jesus. He is the one through whom God is revealed. It's in him that we find perfect wisdom. It's Jesus that we all need to trust and follow.

[2 : 2 6] Now I'm sure that this verse, these two verses have been preached on thousands of times and no wonder because there's so much that we can look at in these two sentences.

Today though, I want to focus primarily on one word. I want to focus on the word all, trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Now when we see that phrase, all your heart, we can often think of it in terms of commitment, can't we? So we think in terms of having that kind of strong, full, committed trust in God.

As we would often say, a wholehearted trust in God and that's conveying the idea of commitment. And that's absolutely true and good and accurate. And as we seek to follow Jesus, there is little or no value in being half-hearted.

We want to be wholehearted in our commitment. But alongside thinking in terms of commitment, what I want us to explore today is the fact that I think that we should also understand the word all in terms of content.

[3 : 45] So not just in terms of wholehearted commitment, but in terms of content. In fact, the word all in Hebrew that the Old Testament was written in can also be translated each or every or the whole.

And I think that's indicating that the phrase isn't just talking about trust in terms of full commitment. It's also getting us to think in terms of trusting God in relation to the content of the whole of our hearts, the content of every part of our hearts.

Now, that's incredibly important because it's getting us to think about both the scope and the depth of Christianity. Hope in the sense that it is relevant to every single part of life.

Depth in the sense that the Gospel is going to penetrate to the deepest parts of who we are. So I want us to think about that today.

To do that, we're going to have to start by saying a wee bit about the words heart and trust. The word heart, both in Hebrew and in English, is used to express more than just the organ that pumps blood around your body.

[5 : 01] In the Bible, the heart refers to the inner immaterial nature of an individual. So the biblical understanding of humanity or biblical anthropology, as we call it, that recognizes that being a human involves a physical and a non-physical aspect.

So physically, we have bodies. We use them to perform actions. And non-physically, we have a mind. We have emotions.

We have a conscience. We have desires. We have a personality. Although people who know me will probably say, well, he doesn't have much personality, but there is some in there somewhere.

The Bible describes these two elements as body and soul. Sometimes it will use the language of flesh referring to the physical part and spirit referring to the non-physical part. And that, of course, makes perfect sense.

Biblical anthropology makes perfect sense because we can all recognize that our humanity involves a physical body and non-physical personalities. And in many ways, it's actually the non-physical that we prioritize, even though we live in an age today that talks very much about physical material and takes a worldview that in many ways focuses on that.

[6 : 20] In day-to-day life, it's the non-physical that we focus on. Because if you imagine you're talking about somebody that you know and you're asked, what do they like?

What's that person like? You don't tend to automatically answer that question by saying, they're 5'10", brown hair, they've got size 5 shoes, they're 10 stone.

You don't answer in those terms. If someone says, what do they like, then you'll say, well, she's nice, she's quiet, she's loud, she's friendly, she's grumpy. All of those are non-physical things. It's the non-physical aspect that we tend to focus on when we talk about what a person is like.

The word heart in the Bible is used to describe all of that, that non-physical aspect of who we are.

Now, we do that in English as well, especially in regard to emotions when something awful happens, we'll say that we're brokenhearted. We'll also do it a little bit in terms of decision making. So maybe when you're thinking about doing something, you'll say, you know, I know in my heart that this is the right thing to do.

[7 : 29] Hebrew in the Old Testament goes even further. The word heart refers to our entire inner being. Not just our emotions and our decisions, but also our moral conscience whereby we discern right from wrong, our will through which we make choices, our understanding of what goes on in the world around us.

In other words, our whole personality has been referred to with this word heart. All of that means that in the biblical sense of the word, an awful lot goes on in our hearts.

And so what I want us to ask is this, if we examine all of our hearts, what do we find?

Well, the answer to that's a lot, isn't it? And there's too much to cover in one sermon, probably too much to cover in a thousand sermons, but I want to suggest seven things that I can see in my heart and that I'm pretty confident you will be able to see in your own heart as well.

Here they are. You'll admire my wonderful, accurate, not to scale drawing of a heart. Here are the areas that I want us to think about. Delights, things that fill us with joy.

[8 : 54] Dreams, things that we hope for, long for, work for. Bruises, things that have hurt us and left us God.

Regrets, things that we wish were different, things we wish had never happened or that we wish we had never done. Mysteries, things that we don't understand.

Secrets, things that nobody else knows but us. Fear, things that worry us, things that we're scared of ever having to face.

Now, I'm sure that there are loads of other categories we could include, so I'm not saying that this is a comprehensive summary of the entire inner being of a human. And there's also overlap.

Bruises are often a mystery because it can be incredibly hard to understand why others would hurt us. Bruises can be a sort of delight and a fear depending on how things work out.

[9 : 57] But I'm just offering you these categories because I hope that they're helpful, I hope that they're realistic. I know that if I look into my heart, I can see all of these areas and I'm suggesting them this morning because I think it's likely that all of these are going to be in your heart as well.

And the key lesson I want us to think about today is that Proverbs 3.5 is calling us to trust in Jesus in every single one of these.

Not some of them, all of them. Following Jesus involves trusting him in every single one of these.

And that brings us to the word trust, which you all now fully understand thanks to Phil's help in the children's talk. It speaks of the idea of firmness, stability.

And that means that it's something that we can put our weight on, something that's safe and secure and stable. Now, Hebrew poetry and the whole of Proverbs is poetry, it often uses a pattern called parallelism where you see the same thing getting said where two halves of a sentence correspond to each other.

[11 : 16] And so the same thing gets said or the opposite thing gets said, but you've got two halves of a sentence that correspond to one another. You can see it very, very clearly in verse 5. You can see trust at the start corresponding to leaning in the second half.

So you think of, I'm saying trust means to stand on something firmly, leaning conveys the same idea. And so that's corresponding. And then there's another parallelism which is expressing a contrast between trusting in the Lord as opposed to trusting in your own understanding.

And so that contrast is being set before us. In other words, the place where we will find firm, stable truth that we can lean on and that we can trust is not in our own understanding.

It is in the Lord. And what I want us to see today is that that applies to all these areas of our heart so we can go through them one by one.

We'll start with delights. Now we've all got things that we delight in, but I think it's probably true to say that that can work both positively and negatively. Positively, we enjoy good gifts from God.

[12 : 29] So even this morning, we've all woken up a lovely summer's day. There's a cool wind blowing. We're not suffering in a heat wave or anything even close to it. We've got food, clothes, so many blessings, family, friendship, warm summer sunshine, a meal with friends, a walk in the hills of Scotland, a sunset at Dalmore Beach.

All of these are amazing and we delight in them. And we recognize that all of these are a wonderful gift from God. So positively, there's lots of things that's good for us to delight in.

But negatively, our hearts can also have delights that are unhealthy. And that can happen in two main ways. One is when we idolize things that are good, but are not God.

So this is a very easy mistake to make whereby we take achievement or experience or relationships or family or friends or whatever it may be, all things that are good, but then we make them the ultimate delight of our lives.

And by doing that, we are replacing God with something that's not God. And the biblical word for that is idolatry. And one of the reasons that God directs us away from that is because ultimately, having something as your God that's not God is only ever going to lead to one thing.

[13 : 49] Disappointment. Because only God can be God. So we can idolize things that aren't good, that are good in themselves, but they're not God.

But the other mistake that we can make is that we can actually delight in things that aren't even good at all. Things like gossip, resentment, pride, sexual immorality, manipulation, greed, all of these can be incredibly attractive, even delightful, but yet they're actually poisonous.

And any pressure they bring is only going to be temporary. So we can fall into that mistake of delighting the wrong things. What should we do?

How can we distinguish between the positive and the negative? The answer is that in this part of our hearts, we need to trust God. And a key aspect of doing that is to listen to what he wants for us.

And that takes us back to one of the most fundamental truths of reality, the fact that God is creator. We are His creation. He is the one who knows what's best for us.

[14 : 59] He's the one who knows what we need. And the fact that we are made by Him and made for Him, even basic common sense tells you that listening to Him is going to be a good idea.

And that gives us a good question to ask ourselves. You look at the delights of your heart and ask yourself, do these delights show that you trust God or that you doubt Him?

In other words, could God share in the delights of your heart? Do they reflect what He wants for you and for me? Or do we delight in things that to God are a disgrace?

And the claim of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the claim that we make as Christians is that the deepest, the most real, the most satisfying delights are only going to be found in your trust in Jesus Christ.

We trust Him with our delights. It also dreams. In our hearts, we all have things that we hope for, long for, wish for. And again, this can work positively and negatively.

[16 : 05] Positively, you might be working towards that dream. Maybe you're well on the way. Maybe you're actually already enjoying some of it. And today you come rejoicing in the things that have gone well in the past week or the past month or the past year.

And that is good. And that is all really good. And as a church family, we share in those joys together. But dreams can also work negatively because maybe you had a dream that you never achieved.

Or maybe you actually did achieve your dream and it hasn't turned out the way you thought. Maybe you worked incredibly hard for your dream job that is actually really hard.

Maybe you managed to build the house of your dreams, but now paying off the mortgage is keeping you awake at night. Dreams can inspire us, but they can also torment us.

And the culture around us is constantly feeding us this lie that says, you know, the only way you can have fulfillment in life is if your dreams come true, your every dream has got to come true, but it's a lie.

[17 : 15] And that kind of your dreams must come through mindset makes no sense at all because most of the dreams that people have involve something that can only actually be a reality for a very, very few people.

And that's going to tell us that if everyone is chasing the dreams that only a tiny few can have, then the vast majority of people are going to feel disappointed.

What do we do? The answer is that in this part of our heart, we trust Jesus. So whether you're young and you've got great opportunities ahead, whether you're old with missed opportunities behind, or whether you're somewhere in the middle with a mixture of the two, the key to finding peace and satisfaction is not to keep running after some dream.

The key is to stand firm on Jesus. And there's two great reasons for that. And they're both arise from theological doctrines. One is the doctrine of providence, the fact that God is in control of everything, the fact that our lives are in his hands.

That is such a comfort for us. The fact that Jesus is king and he is in control. Our lives are in his hands. I heard somebody say not long ago that providence is like a soft pillow, something that we can just lean on and rest on and take comfort in the fact that God is in control of everything.

[18 : 42] The other is the doctrine of glorification, the fact that Jesus has promised something incredible in the future for all of his people.

And nothing that we can achieve or experience or enjoy in this life can compare with that, with what Jesus is preparing for all who trust in him.

And this is where we see that the world around us is saying, chase your dreams. The Gospel says, forget your dreams. But not because we're all destined for failure and misery, but the Gospel says, forget your dreams for the simple reason that they are never, ever going to be big enough.

Your dreams are never going to be big enough because the future that Jesus has for all who trust in him is a restored universe, a resurrected body that will never decay and fellowship with God and with one another that is beyond anything we could ever dream of.

What should we do with the dreams in our hearts? We should trust Jesus with them and look to him. Third thing is bruises.

[20 : 04] This is where we see one of the crucial differences between the flesh and the spirit, between the physical bits and the non-physical bits of our humanity. Physically we get bruised. We all know what that's like, but it doesn't usually take long for those bruises to heal.

Maybe we get bruised, but sometimes those bruises never go away. That can happen in lots of ways. You can be picked on in school.

You can struggle to find your role and purpose as you go into adulthood. Maybe you've been rejected by somebody that you really liked. Maybe you've been hurt by somebody that you really trusted.

These bruises can prompt all sorts of responses in us. Bitterness, anger, revenge, hardness, depression, frustration.

It's interesting, physical bruises will make your skin dark, but non-physical bruises will make your heart dark, where all sorts of bitter responses can emerge.

[21 : 09] None of these things work. The answer is in Proverbs 3.5. The answer is to trust Jesus. We can trust Him because He is the great healer of the brokenhearted.

If you're sitting here today and life has turned out to be rubbish, you can go to Jesus for healing, for comfort and help.

We can also trust Him because He is judge and ultimately He is going to right every wrong and He's going to call every injustice into account.

We can leave it with Him. We can trust Him with our bruises. Same as through for regrets. You look into your heart, you find regrets.

For all of us, there is stuff that we wish was different, stuff that leaves pain and sorrow in our hearts. Sometimes in terms of a regret, we're the victim.

[22 : 15] There's things that's gone wrong in our lives. There's things that we couldn't control, things that were never in our hands but which now have caused a regret that's always in our hearts.

Sometimes we're the victim, but sometimes we're the villain. Sometimes there's things that we have said or done that we just wish we hadn't.

Both of these reveal the effect that sin is had on humanity, the fact that we're both, sin is left us as both victim and villain, as sufferers and as sinners. Victim because we're on the receiving end of pain, lies, exploitation and all sorts of other awful stuff.

Sin because we can even be the ones who cause these things ourselves. And the result of all of that is regret, wishing that things were different and that can be crippling.

What's the answer? It's to trust in Jesus. And we can do that. We can trust in Jesus because in Jesus you will find the two things that a heart full of regrets desperately needs.

[23 : 22] Jesus offers us forgiveness. Now that's one of the most simple statements of the Gospel but one of the most important. I want you to think of the thing in your life that just makes you kind of cower and cringe with shame.

Whether that's something you did last week or whether it's something that you did 50 years ago as a child. Something that always just pricks your heart and makes you think, I just wish I hadn't done that.

I've come to Jesus and he says, forgiven, forgotten, gone.

Jesus offers you that level of forgiveness, which is just amazing. But the other thing that Jesus provides us with is not just the free offer of forgiveness.

In Jesus you also find the command for you to forgive others. And that is absolutely crucial. That's his expectation of us that we too would forgive others who have wronged us.

[24 : 27] And the crucial thing we need to recognize is that if your heart is full of regrets or bruises because of what others have done, that is exactly what you need. If you feel hurt, bitter, frustrated and angry about how someone has behaved towards you or towards someone that you love, the only way that that regret is going to be healed is if you forgive the person who wronged you.

Now our culture would say that's madness. That's not true. But it is. And if you're in two minds as to whether that's true or not, if you think, well, I don't know if I agree with you Thomas when you say that.

All I can say to you is try it yourself. Try and see whether you will get more peace from staying frustrated with somebody or from forgiving them.

We're nearly there. Time is running out, but we're nearly there. Mysteries. For all of us, there's stuff that we don't understand that can relate to the big philosophical questions of life, life, death, time, eternity, justice, truth, reality, but also for the personal details of our lives.

Why didn't I get that job? Why doesn't the person who I love feel the same way about me? Why did that person have to be so horrible to me last week at work?

[25 : 53] Every heart has to grapple with mysteries. But we can make two mistakes when we try to address that. One is to think that we have the capacity for every answer.

And the other is to think that we have the right to every answer. And the truth is we have neither. We don't have the capacity for every answer of every mystery. And that just that immediately removes the right to have that.

You can't take an ocean and empty it into a bucket. We just don't have the capacity for all answers. And the crucial thing that we've got to recognize is that the fact that God is our Creator, the fact that we are creation, that we are small and finite is telling us that mystery in our hearts is normal.

In fact, mystery is logical. It's appropriate. We're not made to have all the answers. So what does that mean for us when we face mysteries? Does it mean we just suck it up and think, oh, well, that's just the way it's going to be?

The answer is that we trust Jesus with all the mysteries in our hearts. And the key point about Christianity is that the gospel is not offering you all the answers.

[27 : 06] The gospel is offering you the person who has all the answers. So Jesus is not the librarian of life as though we kind of go to him and say, tell me the answer to this, that and the next thing, because I want that information.

Jesus is not the librarian of life. Jesus is the author of life. He's the explanation for everything. He is the one who knows every answer. And our job is not to try and take his place and say, oh, Jesus, give me all the answers so I can be like you.

Our job is to trust him because he is the one who knows. And again, there's two great theological reasons for that.

They're both big words. One's a big word that you'll find in theology books, the fact that God is omniscient, the fact that he knows all things. He knows all mysteries. The other is a big word, but you're not going to find it in any theological books because I made it up myself.

God is omniscient and he is omnibriant, which I think is a wonderful word. He's omnibriant in the sense that in every way God is good, kind, trustworthy.

[28 : 17] And for those reasons, the fact that he's omniscient and omnibriant with the mysteries in our hearts, we can trust him. My last two are very brief.

Secrets. Every heart has secrets. Many of our delights, dreams, bruises, regrets might be secrets.

Maybe you've got great hopes and plans in your life that you haven't told anybody else about yet. Maybe there's mistakes that you've made that you don't want anyone to know about. Maybe there's things that you struggle with and you're terrified that anybody would know.

Maybe you've got doubts and questions that you're too afraid to talk to someone about. Maybe you long to know Jesus and to openly confess him, but you're terrified about what people are going to think.

We have all got secrets and it's funny. Our secrets are the one part of our heart that is most closely guarded, that's most hidden and that's most impossible for anyone else to get to.

[29 : 31] And yet it's the part of our heart where we feel most vulnerable, isn't it? And the answer is the same. The answer is to trust in the Lord.

And the same two big words that we had a moment ago apply. God is omniscient. That means that with Jesus secrets aren't secrets. That is one of the single most important things that any of us can recognize.

With Jesus secrets aren't secrets. That means that you can freely talk to him about anything. And you're not going to surprise him, you're not going to disappoint him.

And if you have maybe never prayed for 20 years and you think, oh, you know, Jesus is going to be so appalled when he finds out, I haven't prayed for so long.

It doesn't work like that. You're simply going to be delighted to hear your voice again today. So God is omniscient.

[30 : 33] He knows all things. That means secrets aren't secrets, but God is also omnibibant. That means that with Jesus secrets aren't weapons. Now, so often in our society, secrets become weapons where somebody finds out something about somebody and you use that as a weapon to hold them to ransom or to exploit them or whatever it may be.

Jesus is omnibibant. That means you never see any of that awful rubbish in Jesus. So when it comes to your secrets, you will look after you.

He'll be gentle with you. He'll care for you. Psalm 139, which we sang captures that so beautifully. It says in that, Sam, you search me.

You know me. You hold me. You think about that like, like if that was the way I expect that Sam to work is, you know, if it's in reference to me, you search me, you know me, you reject me because someone searching in me is going to find all sorts of rubbish.

But the Sam is so beautiful. You search me. You know me. You hold me. Because you're His, you're safe and secure.

[31 : 51] Last of all, fears. There's a thousand reasons why our hearts are afraid and we could highlight loads. What I want to actually just highlight though is the fact that all the other areas we've highlighted can all be a source of fear.

Fear that we're going to lose the things that we delight in, health, possessions, opportunities, abilities, friends, family, we can all be gripped with fear that we're going to lose them. Fear that dreams won't come through.

Fear that bruises are going to get hurt again or that new ones are going to come. Fear that our regrets are going to come back to haunt us. Fear that the mystery of our lives that underneath them lurks something dark or bad.

Fear that our secrets are going to be exposed. The Gospel tells us that Jesus takes away all these fears.

And I can say that.

[32 : 53] I can honestly say that. I'm not afraid. Not afraid of delights not being there because there's an amazing promise of eternity for us.

I'm not afraid of my dreams not coming through because Jesus just transforms everything. Not afraid of being bruised again because I know that he'll help me. Not afraid of regret because I know that Jesus has forgiven me.

Not afraid of mysteries. In fact, I'm relieved that I don't need to solve all the mysteries in my life. And I'm even not afraid of secrets being exposed because ultimately it's what Jesus thinks that matters, not what you think or what other people think.

That's the difference that the Gospel makes. He takes away all these fears. All he asks us to do is trust him.

And so Proverbs 3.5 is telling us to trust in the Lord with all our heart. That definitely speaks in terms of commitment.

[33 : 59] God forbid that we're ever half-hearted. But it also speaks in terms of content. In every part of our hearts, the answer is to trust in Jesus.

And the difference that Jesus makes to all of these is part of what makes being a Christian so utterly brilliant.

So please, I want you to go away this afternoon and I want you to look into your hearts. Not like Walt Disney, look into your heart. Just in an actual self-examination kind of way.

Look at your hearts and look for all of these things. And maybe you'll find more stuff as well that I haven't touched on. But look for all of these things. Think about it.

Think about the difference that Jesus makes. Think about the difference that Jesus makes and then ask yourself one crucial question.

[34 : 56] What am I going to do now? Amen. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for the incredible difference that you make in every part of our lives.

We pray that we would all be able to trust in you with all our hearts. Amen. Our concluding Psalm is Psalm 37, which is a wonderful way of responding to God's Word because it speaks about setting our trust upon the Lord.

And part of what this Psalm speaks about is how it's so easy to actually look at other people who aren't following God and to think, oh, they're getting on so much better. This Psalm is reminding us that actually it's by setting our trust in the Lord that we find security, peace and hope.

So I'll stop it here again. We're going to stand to sing these words to conclude. Say, though I trust upon the Lord, and believe that you engulf and soar the wind, the land and the earth, and where ever we have food, delight thyself in God again.

Really, we've done quite enough.

[37 : 09] Like unto the light he shall, Thy righteousness dismay, And he, Thy judgment shall bring forth, Like new tidings of the day.

Rest in the Lord and patiently, Wait for him to not fail, For him who cross spring in his way, Success in sin doth get.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, and all God's people say. Amen. Thank you so much for being with us this morning.

We've got tea and coffee served at the table at the back, so please do hang around to share some time together. We'd love for you to be able to stay with us, and we'd love to see you at the evening service tonight at 6pm if you're able to come.

Thank you for being with us this morning. May God be with you all.