

MILE

8

TRANSFORMED – Our Lives Renewed to be Like Christ (a DISCIPLESHIP Journey)

Mile Marker 8 ... “A Transformed Heart (Part 2) – A Heart Like Christ (Faithfulness & Humility)”

Various texts

This week, we continue our focus on this basic theme of a **transformed HEART**. In Christ, God’s Spirit is at work renewing our lives – this work is an all-encompassing reality, not just about a single life compartment. Our faith commitment to Him should infiltrate *every* part of who we are and influence *every* area of our lives. Indeed, as opposed to some sort of external makeover through behavior modification, it’s a *total* inside-out process involving our hearts. According to God’s Word, that’s how we work as people: ***the HEART matters so much because it is the internal source for whatever we externally express*** (remember the language of Proverbs 4:23 and Luke 6:43-45 – the heart is our basic control panel). It’s true with the sin and evil displayed by people (Mark 7:20-23); it’s also true with good fruit produced in a life (see Galatians 5:22-23 ... it’s the Spirit’s inside-out working).

In Mile Marker 7, we identified a heart of RIGHTEOUSNESS as part of such a transformed heart. On one level, it’s a theme that obviously matters to Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. On another level, it’s a worthy theme because it further establishes the importance of the overall inside-out progression within our lives of faith – it should be “beneath the surface.” For this mile marker, we consider a general goal when it comes to a transformed heart before focusing on two specific expressions.

A General Goal: A Heart like Christ’s

When it comes to our hearts, on the broadest and most basic level, ***the Spirit wants us to have hearts like Jesus***. Given what we’ve seen overall in this discipleship journey, this should be an obvious goal. As we follow Jesus, each one of us is learning to live our lives as He would – that includes not only our actions, but also the more internal parts of who we are, even and especially the HEART! For the main portions of this mile marker, we’re going to consider two specific ways in which the Holy Spirit transforms us to have a Christ-like heart: **a heart of FAITHFULNESS to the Father’s will** and **a heart of HUMILITY**. We highlight these two because of their importance to our lives of faith – one reflective of our relationship with God, the other of our relationship with others.

Before we get to these two characteristics, let’s first think more broadly about the heart of Jesus we see on display in the Gospels. By reflecting on what we see in Him, it helps us reflect on what it means for us to have such Christ-like hearts overall. It’s just like any kind of RENOVATION or MAKEOVER – realities that have become quite popular through various TV shows. Amidst all the preliminary work, there is an effort to create a visual impression of what the finished product will be in the end. Sometimes, this is done using computer software; other times, it’s more a matter of trying to help someone imagine the outcome of the renovation. Either way, it’s the idea of creating a vision of what should be. Likewise, when it comes to the renovation of our lives, the better we grasp what the end goal should be (like Christ!), the better position we are in as the process unfolds.

Of course, *especially as we reflect on a HEART being transformed to be like Christ*, let's make sure we remember not to be content with settling for something only on the surface. We should consider what it means for us to *do* as Jesus did (remember the "W.W.J.D." bracelet fad☺?); but, it's even more foundational to think about *being* or *becoming* as Jesus was and is. Indeed, Christ-likeness goes beyond Jesus' external appearance and even beyond His outward actions. It's also about the underlying *heart* from which it all flowed! In many ways, while this internal dimension is harder to bring to fruition, it's a far easier category in which we can think about being Christ-like. After all, there are many externals that are different about our lives today than in Jesus' 1st century life – when we think of being like Jesus, this is often what we consider. And yet, it's on the internal level (*i.e.* attitudes, motivations, values, priorities, etc.) where, regardless of such external circumstances, we can process more easily how such a heart in Jesus should apply *throughout* our very different lives.

Below, we've identified a couple of specific characteristics of Jesus' heart based on what we see on display in His life (again, we're saving two specific ones – **FAITHFULNESS** and **HUMILITY**). Think through some different scenes from the Gospels. Use the remaining two rows to identify a couple of more heart-level characteristics you think are significant in Him. Then, fill out the empty spaces in the table to the right by reflecting on what it means for us to have such a heart beating within us.

Jesus' heart	What it means for us to have such a heart
A heart of COMPASSION (see Matthew 8:1-3 or 14:13-14)	
A heart full of GRACE and TRUTH (see John 1:14 and 17)	

What can hinder us from having such a Christ-like heart (in these specific ways and/or more generally)?

When it comes to such characteristics, how can we cultivate these realities particularly on a heart-level so that they're more than just external?

A Specific Characteristic: A Heart of Faithfulness to the Father's Will

One clear theme in Jesus' life is His obedience to the Father. It's similar to what we see with Westley the "farm boy" from the movie *The Princess Bride*. He would say "as you wish" to express love through his voluntary submission to Princess Buttercup's requests. Incidentally, in John 14-16, one of the themes Jesus emphasizes is that our love for Him and the Father will lead directly to our obedience of Him. Indeed, it's exactly what we see from Jesus towards His Father. Now, while this surrender is displayed externally, it's good to make sure we see how it comes from an underlying heart of faithfulness to the Father – it's what beat in Jesus and it should be what beats within us. Reflect on how we see such a heart on display in the following 4 scenes from Matthew's Gospel.

READ Matthew 3:13-17 ... when Jesus comes to John to be baptized, John initially pushes back. Jesus finally persuades him with this key phrase that comes in v. 15 – *"It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness"* (NIV) or *"It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires"* (NLT). The point is simple: Jesus recognized this as something significant in God's eyes ... and so He did it. From the response of v. 17, God agreed with His choice. **Jesus demonstrated a heart of faithfulness.**

READ Matthew 4:1-11 ... After His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. The progression echoes the Israelites exodus from Egypt – through the water into the wilderness. If you remember your OT history, you'll recall that Israel failed spectacularly in that time of testing. This scene in Matthew 4 on the heels of Jesus' baptism comes along with a sense of "will He be faithless like Israel or a Son who is faithful to the Father's will?!" As these temptations unfold, each one represents the evil one providing Jesus with an appealing opportunity to choose a path other than the One laid out by His Father. Recognizing this fully, Jesus each time resists the temptation, choosing instead obedience to God's will. **Jesus demonstrated a heart of faithfulness.**

READ Matthew 16:21-23 ... So much of the first portion of Matthew's Gospel leads up to the declaration of Jesus' identify in Matthew 16:13ff – what we call Peter's "great confession." Of course, from the height of that moment, we see Peter sink to the depths of being labeled as "Satan" by Jesus; it's not exactly a compliment! Consider how much Peter is acting like the evil one back in chapter 4 at Jesus' temptation – offering a way around the path of the cross for which the Father had destined Him. Jesus had great clarity regarding His true mission. Different translations use different words at the beginning of v. 21, but in one way or another, Jesus indicates a sense of "divine necessity" = it's what *must* happen in God's agenda. Indeed, Jesus knew that this was the path and strongly rebuked Peter for suggesting otherwise. **Jesus demonstrated a heart of faithfulness.**

READ Matthew 26:36-46 (see also Mark 14:32-42 and Luke 22:39-46) ... This is such a great scene from the night before Jesus' death – His humanity most fully on display as He agonizes and wrestles through what awaits Him. This is what the plan had been all along, but this is when it all becomes so real. Don't underestimate the challenge and the tension as Jesus fervently prays for another way; there's no reason to think that Jesus couldn't have chosen otherwise. Yet, in the end, He made the same choice He had been making all along, embracing His Father's will, not His own. **Jesus demonstrated a heart of faithfulness.**

Reflect on these scenes – consider what it means about Jesus' own heart and what it looks like for that to become more of your heart.

A Specific Characteristic: A Heart of Humility

If FAITHFULNESS is a good word to capture the heart Jesus' displayed towards the Father, then HUMILITY is a good one for describing His heart displayed towards others. Biblically, in regards to our relationships with others, the word is about lowering yourself for their good – not in the sense of thinking less of yourself, but more the idea of thinking of yourself less. We live in a world characterized by UPWARD MOBILITY, UPGRADES and PROMOTIONS; that's as it was in Jesus' world too. And yet, He came stooping to serve, descending into greatness, even lowering Himself for the sake of others.

We can see this kind of heart on display throughout the Gospels – even His very coming at His birth is marked by how ordinary and even lowly His arrival truly was. Jesus summarizes this reality about His life in Mark 10:45 where He says that *“He did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.”* In a world that thinks of greatness as a matter of power and authority, Jesus taught and modeled greatness as the by-product of humble service.

There's one scene from John 13 that captures it particularly well. **READ John 13:1-5**. It's the night before Jesus' death and He embraces the task of a low-ranking household servant to stoop and wash the filthy feet of His followers.

What stands out about the humble servant's heart in Jesus from this scene?

In Philippians 2, Paul points to the entirety of Jesus' life as a demonstration of this kind of HUMILITY, even the basic choice to reject the glorious splendor of heaven to choose to enter into our world. That's how astounding His heart of HUMILITY is – not just what is on display during His life, but even in the choice as God to leave the Father's presence and enter into our world in the first place. **READ Philippians 2:6-11**. Even as we celebrate the reversal at the end and what it means for Jesus to be exalted, don't miss the series of voluntary demotions Jesus embraced in vv. 6-11.

When you reflect in this way even on Jesus' initial coming to earth, what stands out to you about the heart of HUMILITY that beats within Jesus?

Throughout these scenes, we need to make sure we see the way that Jesus' example – both His actions and the underlying HEART of HUMILITY – are held forth as a model for us.

READ John 13:12-17 ... READ Mark 10:35-35 ... READ Philippians 2:1-5

Reflect on these texts – consider what it means about Jesus' own heart and what it looks like for that to become more of your heart.