

Coronation
June 9

My wife is a graduate of Furman University. The Furman Magazine arrived this week in the mail. We were surprised to read that President Rod Smolla, who started just three years ago, suddenly resigned for personal reasons. And a member of the Board of Trustees, Carl Kohrt, was elected to serve as interim president. It was he who was writing the opening article. He writes, *"Imagine my surprise — and perhaps yours — to find that I, a kid from rural Illinois who came to a seemingly far-off place at the base of Paris Mountain more than 50 years ago to play football but who left a chemist, would be introducing this issue as the interim president of our beloved Furman University."*

The changeover takes place at the end of this month. The board of trustees moved swiftly and decisively to pick someone to run the organization. Someone has to be in charge. Someone has to be in charge. Someone has to run things. Someone has to make the big decisions. So the Board of Trustees had the authority to elect someone to be the interim president. Why? Because someone has to be in charge.

The same is true in your life and mine. Someone has to run things. The one who gets to choose, the one who has the authority to decide who is in charge, is you. And most people have elected themselves to be in charge of them.

But is that the right choice? Is that the best choice? I want to offer you an alternative choice this morning. The apostle Peter recommends that we choose someone else.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) In your heart set apart Christ as Lord.

Choosing this person to run your life involves a place, a process, a person, and a position. We start with the place. The place is in your heart.

THE PLACE: "In your heart"

What is in your heart? The Bible speaks of the heart as a place of many things. **The Bible speaks of the heart as the physical, mental, emotional, volitional, and spiritual center of a person.** Let's examine each of these, briefly.

The heart is the physical center of a person because it pumps blood throughout the body. God said this about blood.

Leviticus 17:11 (NIV) For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

The life of a creature, or a man, is in the blood. While the study of medicine was in its infancy in the ancient world, they understood that the heart pumped blood to the rest of the body. As such the heart was the key organ in the body. So they describe the heart as the physical center of the body.

The heart was also considered the mental or intelligence center of the body. Jesus quoting from Isaiah, says,

Matthew 13:15 (NIV) For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

So the heart was connected with thinking, pondering, worrying about something, even remembering something. We speak of recalling something, of bringing it back to mind. They spoke of recalling something to the heart.

They saw the heart as the mental center of a person. Likewise they spoke of the heart as the emotional center of a person. Look at these examples. Solomon wrote...

Proverbs 12:25 (NIV) An anxious heart weighs a man down...

Ecclesiastes 2:20 (NIV) So my heart began to despair...

(Leviticus 19:17; Proverbs 25:20; Isaiah 65:14; James 3:14)

The common emotions of anxiety, fear, and joy, are all seen as taking place in the heart.

And there is more. In addition to the physical, mental, and emotional, the heart is spoken of as the volitional center of a person. Paul writes to the church in Corinth...

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV)

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give...

Your heart is the center of your will. It is in the heart that you make decisions, that you hold desires, and that you make commitments.

And finally, the heart is the spiritual center of a person. This includes the conscience.

1 John 3:19-21 (NIV) This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence, whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God (Job 27:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19)

Because the heart is the spiritual center of a person, this is where God speaks to us.

Matthew 13:19 (NIV) When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. (John 16)

Romans 10:10 (NIV) For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

(1 Samuel 10:9; Romans 2:15)

And when you become a Christian, God places His Spirit in your heart to accomplish your transformation. Again, we look at what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth.

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NIV) (God) set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

The heart is the center of you. Your heart is the center of you. It is the physical, mental, emotional, volitional, and spiritual center of you as a person. As such it holds a lot of things. It is bigger than it seems. While in physical mass it is small, there is much inside of it.

In the movie, Men in Black, a cat has a collar on, and hanging from this collar is what appears to be a marble, encased in metal bands. But closer examination shows that it is something else. Let's watch.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwbnjq3ntrU>)

What looked like a marble was, in fact, a hollow ball, not empty, but containing a whole galaxy of stars, very tiny indeed, within the sphere hanging around the cat's neck in our world. Thousands of worlds, and billions of tiny beings inhabiting that small space.

In the same way, here is an important truth. **There is a world inside your heart.** Your heart is a small space in our world. And yet how many are the things that are there. All of your dreams and desires and thoughts, your successes and failures all reside in that small space. All of your possessions are treasured there. All the things you would LIKE to own already have a place there too. All of your likes and dislikes are housed there. All of your loves and hates are there. All of the things you are attracted to and all of the things you are repulsed by are there. These and a lot more are in your heart.

Another one of the things in your heart are people. All of your relationships are in your heart. And some of those people are special. Some of those people have been set apart by you. This brings to the process.

THE PROCESS: "set apart"

The process involves setting apart people. Of all the people I know, some have been set apart by me. Donald and Cora Shifflett have been set apart by me. Of all the people in the world that I have met, I have set them apart from all the others. They have a special designation in my life. They have been set apart as my parents. Sure, the world says they are my parents, but I have to accept that. The birth facts are meaningless if I do not accept that designation for them.

If I had been born to some other couple and then adopted by Don and Cora, technically that first couple would be my parents. But having never known them, not being raised by them, but rather being cared for, raised, and loved by Don and Cora Shifflett, it is them I have designated as my parents. It is them I honor and respect in that role.

A similar thing may have happened to you who were raised by a foster parent, or a step parent. There is a person or persons, whether related by birth or not that you have designated as your parents. You consider them your parents. And you related to them as your parents. You have set them apart in your heart as your parents.

I have set apart Roy Shifflett and Tina Murphy as my siblings, brother and sister. I have set apart Margaret Cothran Shifflett as my wife.

All of you I have set apart in my heart. At one time, Al Hunter was just a man on the Pastor Search Committee. Allen Tate was just the man who drove my wife and I around the community while interviewing with the church. But after I accepted the call to be your pastor, I

set apart these men as someone more than just two brothers in Jesus that I better be nice to. When I became your pastor, these men I set apart as partners together in this church family.

So you too are in the process of setting apart people to have a special place in your life. And that brings us to the person.

THE PERSON: "Christ"

The person is Christ. The word Christ means "anointed one". (**Christ = anointed one**). An anointed person was someone who had been assigned a special task or purpose. It is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word Messiah. We capitalize both of them in the Bible because we are speaking of a particular anointed person. God made Jesus His anointed one, His special one. And as we read the Bible we learn that He is more than just a man.

Christ is more than just a man. He is more than just a man who lived in the first century AD. He is more than just a good moral teacher. He is more than just a good Hebrew man. He is more than a prophet from God. He is in fact much more.

Jesus, the Christ is the Son of God. Jesus, the Christ is the rightful King of the Israelites. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. Christ Jesus is the new and final High Priest between God and mankind. Christ is the final and perfect sacrifice for sins.

This is who we are to set apart in our hearts. So let me ask you, is there a place for Christ in your heart? Have you set Christ apart in your heart?

If the answer is yes, let me ask you a further question. Is it the right place? Have you given Him the right position in your heart.

If I set apart Donald Shifflett into the position of friend, that would not be the right position in my heart. If I set apart Roy Shifflett into the position of father, that would not be the right position for him in my heart. If I set apart Allen Tate into the position of uncle, that would not be the right position for him in my heart.

Have you given Christ the right position in your heart? What position should you give Him? What position does He deserve? What position is rightfully His?

THE POSITION: "as Lord"

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) In your heart set apart Christ as Lord.

We can think of our heart as a house. And in it are different rooms. When we become a follower of Jesus, we give Him a place in our hearts. We invite Him into the house of our heart. And we learn that He is not to be a guest, but Lord. He is to rule our hearts.

So we are learning to invite Jesus to be Lord of the living room, the kitchen, the bedroom. But there is a closet we do not invite Him into. There is a high up shelf in a corner of the basement that we try to keep from His notice. There is a drawer of odds and ends that we'd rather He not see.

What might be hidden from Him in these places in your heart? Some of these hidden things are desires that we are keeping to ourselves. "Oh, yeah. One day I'm definitely going to own one of those." These desires we are afraid He might not approve of.

Maybe, too, there is hatred, resentment, even un-forgiveness hidden away in the closets of our heart. We are learning to love everyone... except that one person who hurt us deeply long ago. That hurt we are holding onto. That we are keeping from Jesus.

Maybe there is lust, a little dabbling in pornography here or there. Maybe there is some selfishness, some greed. We keep that away from Jesus. We don't want Him to be Lord of that. He might say, "You don't really need that." or "That doesn't fit in with my plans for you." We don't want to hear that and be faced with a decision to give it up. So we keep it a secret from Jesus. We don't give Him access to that part of our hearts.

Maybe there are habits with your money. It isn't that you spend it on illegal stuff. It is just little comforts and luxuries that you don't want to give up. He may not tell you to, but then, if He knew about them, He might. So you avoid all of those little scenes by keeping that part of your heart hidden from Him.

Maybe it is your time you are keeping hidden. "I'll give Him Sunday mornings. But I'm not giving Him all my time."

The problem with these secrets is that you are not letting Jesus be the Lord of all that He IS Lord of. You are keeping some of yourself from Him. You have a divided heart, which is sin and lack of faith. A divided heart just won't work. You can't be lord of some of your heart and Jesus lord of the rest. In your heart set apart Christ as Lord of all.

Someone has to rule your heart. Someone has to rule your heart. Make it Jesus Christ. In your heart, set apart Christ as Lord. In your heart, set apart Christ as Lord.

Jesus is Lord of everywhere and everything. When we receive Him as Lord, it does not change Him. He is already Lord of all. If we do not accept Him as Lord, it does not change the circumstances. He is Lord of all of your world. But only you can make Him Lord of your heart. Only You can make Christ the center of You.

Today, right now, in your heart, by prayer to Jesus, set apart Christ as Lord by showing Him room, every closet, every shelf, every drawer, every desire, every hope, every goal, every commitment, every prejudice, every sin, everything in your heart. Today, in your heart set apart Christ as Lord.

In Jesus, only Jesus, there is complete forgiveness of every sin. Therefore make your repentance complete also. Today, give yourself completely over to Jesus as Lord of your life. A sample prayer is at the end of your outline.

You who are Christians, have you been holding something back from Jesus? Turn it over to Him today as we go to Him in prayer.

Sample Prayer: Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner against God. I know my sin deserves death and hell. I need a rescuer, a savior. I believe You are the Savior I need because You died for my sins. I now receive You, as my Savior and turn my life over to You as my Lord.