



Sunday 7th March 2021

Morning Weardale! Let's worship together before we as God to speak to us through His Word ☺

Worship

Battle Belongs - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johgSkNj3-A>

Lord I give You my heart - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c-KwQA7b-Q>

Our Father in Heaven – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FCel-VnX6k>

Proverbs 4:20

- 20 My son, pay attention to what I say;
listen closely to my words.
- 21 Do not let them out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;
- 22 for they are life to those who find them
and health to a man's whole body.
- 23 ***Above all else, guard your heart, for it is
the wellspring of life.***
- 24 Put away perversity from your mouth;
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead,
fix your gaze directly before you.
- 26 Make level paths for your feet
and take only ways that are firm.
- 27 Do not swerve to the right or the left;
keep your foot from evil.

Above all else guard your heart!

The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart – When God found David he said “I have found a man after My Own Heart, who will do all My will.” God is not so much interested in the outward appearance but rather the condition of a person's heart: their desire and love for Him and His ways!

The bible often talks about the heart as a garden which needs tending – Jesus describes the wayside, stony ground, thorny ground and good ground in the parable of the sower; explaining that the seed which fell on the good ground yielded a crop of: “some a

hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” ... Good gardens yield good fruit – In fact, our verse from Proverbs 4:20 says that everything in our lives wells-up from the condition of our hearts – our relationships, our countenance, our faith, our joy and peace, our outlook on life, our health and finances Our whole life is the fruit of the condition of our hearts.

The Shulamite in the Song of Songs says:

*Awake, O north wind,
And come, O south!
Blow upon my garden,
That its spices may flow out.
Let my beloved come to his garden
And eat its pleasant fruits.*

The garden of our hearts needs both the pleasant, warm south wind and the cold, harsh north wind to encourage growth and nurture fruitfulness. The blessings of God bring joy, comfort, thanksgiving and gratefulness to our fruitfulness and the trials and difficulties bring opportunity for maturity, growth, faith and tenacity – “Having done everything to stand, stand firm then...”

In relation to our current circumstances – maybe we have experienced both the north and south wind blowing upon our gardens – may our lives of worship in both the good and bad times be pleasing to our Beloved.

It is also noteworthy that in both Jesus’ parable and the Shulamite’s song the purpose of the garden was to bear fruit – that the well tended garden is a fruitful and pleasant place. In John 15 Jesus says: “Remain in me and you will bear much fruit!” This fruit, of course, is the love, joy, peace etc that we read about in Galatians 5, but also, it is the fruit of the Kingdom of God – souls! Men, women and children brought to faith in Christ because of the work of God in the garden of our hearts – both the cold north wind but also the warm south wind, the softening of our hard heartedness by our gracious and merciful God.

Here are three areas in which I believe we can make a good start at tending to the garden of our hearts:

1) Repentance

Always the best place to start from – walking in humility and with the understanding that we are in need of a forgiving and merciful Saviour. Luke 18:9 tells the story of the pharisee and the tax collector – how the hard hearted, self righteous Pharisee was so thrilled with himself and his religious “righteousness” that he was condemned while the tax collector beat his chest in repentance for his sins and was forgiven and made right with God – with God’s righteousness!!!

We all sin -

Psalm 19:12-13

- 11 By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*
- 12 Who can discern his errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.*
- 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then will I be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.*
- 14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

Jeremiah 17:9

- 9 The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?*

Romans 6:23

- 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in [b] Christ Jesus our Lord.*

So we must keep pulling our hearts back to the Cross – The amazing Apostle Paul says “I die daily” ... Daily repentance, daily dealing with our sinful human nature, daily receiving of His righteousness, power and grace to live in holiness. ☺

2) Forgiveness

Jesus clearly says that if we do not forgive others then God will NOT forgive us our sins! This is a BIG DEAL ... Unforgiveness is absolutely not an option for children of God ... When we don't forgive others we basically step down from the GRACE level and into the judgement level where sin has to be legally judged with punishment! ...

Choosing to forgive elevates us to live in God's GRACE level (which we heard about from Florence last week ☺)

a) Forgive others so we can be forgiven:

Mark 11:25

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

b) Forgiving others makes US healed, and pure:

Hebrews 12:12

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

3) Intimacy and Surrender

James 4:7

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

To move into greater relationship we must surrender our will – Remember – God said He “found David a man after His own heart who will do all My Will”

Luke 17:33

Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

The funny thing is, we all – in some measure or another – try to keep our own lives, we have an erroneous human belief that we know what’s best for us, how to live our best lives and look after ourselves – DUH! ... God knows the plans He has for us, plans to prosper us and not to harm us, to give us a future and a hope!!!

Do we miss out in our relationship with God ? Does our pride, fear, indifference or human zeal get in the way of walking into His promises? This is not a point for condemnation – not at all – rather an opportunity to take time to allow Him to free us from the afore-mentioned hindrances and help us to lose our lives to find His!

Naaman the Syrian nearly missed his miracle because in his pride he didn't want to go to the Jordan He had to dip 7 times and when he humbled himself he was completely cured from leprosy!

Abraham tried to fulfil God’s promise in his own way – we all know how that turned out!

King Joash was told to strike the ground with the arrows (2 Kings 13) but only did so 3 times – thus not receiving the full measure of victory God had for him because of his indifference! – In contrast, Elijah the prophet – prayed for rain 7 times What if he had stopped after 6 ???

There are so many more examples of how to surrender to God, to His will, to find a place of intimacy with Him and trust entirely in His plans for us But it all happens from the garden of our hearts ... Being diligent with what God has entrusted to us!

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Our Father in Heaven – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FCel-VnX6k>

