

**June 2, 2024 – Second Sunday after in Pentecost**

**“The Beating and Pumping of the Human Heart” by Pastor Julio Romero**

**Gospel: Mark 2:23 - 3:6**

As we hear this Gospel, it is easy to focus on the lack of understanding and the harsh criticism from the Pharisees to Jesus’ disciples and to Jesus for not observing the Sabbath the way the Pharisees were traditionally taught. But today, I want to shift my attention to Jesus’ feelings and anger at them for their lack of human compassion.

There are two events in this Gospel. The first one is about the observance of the Sabbath day which, according to the Pharisees, the disciples were violating the holiness of by plucking the heads of grain as they walked through a wheat field. The second one is the healing of a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath.

According to the Sabbath law, those two actions, one by the disciples and the other one by Jesus, were considered acts of work, a clear violation of the law.

Of course, Jesus’ view of those rules and laws were different than those of the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord knew that these laws were man made and did not represent the will of His Father.

To understand these two stories, it helps to know that those rules or laws were interpretations and byproducts of the main law “to keep the Sabbath holy”. There were not one or two, but many rules and regulations attached to the observance of the Sabbath that the scribes or lawyers had created.

That was the kind of world in which Jesus did His ministry of healing, teaching and proclamation of the Gospel. It was not an ideal world for Him because all those rules and regulations had taken away the true spirit in which the commandment “to keep the Sabbath holy” had been given. To reset the true spirit of the law, Jesus learned that it was too difficult, if not impossible, for the Pharisees and all his opponents to do so.

No wonder Jesus looked at the Pharisees with anger. He was grieved at the hardness of their heart.

If I recall well, there was only one other occasion where our Lord Jesus was angry. It was the day He cleansed the Temple, God’s house, from all the money changers

and animals sold there to be sacrificed as an offering to God. The Temple had become a marketplace and not a place of worship as it was meant to be.

As a true human, Jesus had mixed feelings: He was angry but at the same time He was grieved by the hardness of the Pharisees' hearts.

His anger and grieved heart tell us that He cares about us, otherwise none of that would have bothered him but because of His love for us. He truly wished things would be much different and that every human heart would be more sensitive to the needs of others.

How is it possible that in the observance of something so beautiful, so worthy of the pouring of the human heart as is the celebration of the day of rest, a day of worship, we would turn it into something that angers and grieves God? If that is the result of our devotion, service and celebration of the day of the Lord, we are certainly on the wrong side, and that was the side where the Pharisees were.

The hardening of the heart is not a new topic in the story of God and humanity. We all know the story of Pharaoh and Moses. Every time there was a plague, Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to set the Hebrew people free, and as the plagues got more severe, the more he hardened his heart and the more suffering he inflicted upon the Hebrew people.

What it was indeed was the hardening of Pharaoh's personal will, of his soul and spirit, the hardening of his consciousness and sensitivity to human rights, dignity, respect, and dreams of others.

The heart is a representation of our soul, our spirit, but it has become the easy way for us to speak about our feelings, emotions and how to describe or judge a person's character.

So, let's learn about the physical heart:

From medical science, we learn the following: The heart weighs between 7 and 15 ounces (16 ounces is one pound, it is almost a pound) and it is the size of our fist (make a fist). For a person who lives a long life it will beat up to 3.5 billion times. It pumps about 2,000 gallons of blood daily.

The heart is an incredible organ, isn't it? Knowing all this about the heart makes me wonder that if we could just equate or turn the number of beats and the number of gallons pumped daily into acts of kindness, compassion, and good deeds for others,

how things would be. The Pharisees would have given thanks to God that the disciples had their daily bread from the field of wheat on a Sabbath day.

The Pharisees would have celebrated the healing miracle of the man with a withered hand on a Sabbath day. The will and law of God would have been completely fulfilled.

The outcome, the ending would have been totally different in both stories.

Now, I ask, who is the one we are hardening our hearts to? Who in our lives are we hardening our personal will, soul and spirit to? Or for whom are we not equating the amazing number of our heart beats and gallons of blood to gallons and beats of love and kindness?

In every relationship, in every law, rule and regulation there is always room for human sensitivity, for human love, for human soul and spirit. Especially if those rules and laws are God's. This is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said that the Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath.

None of us wants to grieve, to cause pain to the heart of Jesus. We already inflicted so much pain upon Him when He was in this world. Instead, let's make Him smile, to look upon us with favour as we go on showing our Christian character in every moment and circumstance in this world. Let's show Him that we do care, the same way He cares for us.

May the wisdom and guidance the Spirit of God helps us to do so.

**Amen.**

