

## What's Gotten Into You...A Fresh Heart!

Ezekiel 36:20-28

March 17, 2019

As we continue our journey into the season of Lent, a time of taking a good look at who we are and what we are, we are answering the question, "What's gotten into you?"

Last week we looked into a "new normal" that is to be in us. It begins with a confession of that which is not pleasing to God and seeking to repent and walk away from those things that separate us from Jesus' love. We were challenged to have a "new normal" in our lives...a new way of life in Jesus.

We highlighted the verse out of Ephesians chapter 4 as our "What's gotten into you" theme verse for the entire Lenten journey to Resurrection Sunday:

***"...take on an entirely new way of life---a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces His character in you." (Ephesians 4:23 Message bible)***

What's gotten into you? Have you asked anyone that question this past week?

Has anyone asked you that soul searching question this past week?

Have you asked yourself each day that question, "What's gotten into me?"

I want to share with you a story about a teenager whose life story will challenge us with the next answer we are looking at in the question, "What's gotten into you..." That answer is..."A Fresh Heart!"

This young man, by the name of Patrick, grew up in a religious home. His father, Calpurnius was a deacon in the church and his mother, Conchessa was also actively involved in the faith.

Patrick didn't follow the faith of his parents. He prided himself to be an intellectual agnostic. His heart simply wasn't in the faith of his family.

At the age of 16 a terrorist group from Ireland attacked the settlement of Bannavem, Scotland where Patrick lived and kidnapped him. He was abducted and taken to Ireland to work as a slave. His job was to tend the sheep of a wealthy individual.

Later, Patrick would write he believed this was punishment for not following God in his life. In his *Confessio*, Patrick shared what happened to him during the 6 years of being held a prisoner by the terrorist. Listen to his words:

*"The Lord opened my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that, even so late, I might remember my transgressions and **turn with all my heart** to the Lord my God, who had regard for my insignificance and pitied me in my youth and ignorance. He watched over me before I knew him, and before I had enough sense to distinguish between good and evil, and He protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son."*

Patrick began to love God, praying many times a day as he tended the flock. He wrote, *"More and more did the love of God and my fear of him and faith increase."*

After 6 years of being held captive in Ireland, Patrick was able to escape and endured many tribulations and eventually returned to his family in Scotland. It wasn't long before Patrick began to hear in his spirit a call to return to Ireland to be a missionary to the very people who had taken him captive.

Stung intensely in his HEART, Patrick heeded the call of God. He studied and became a priest and then made bishop. The pope gave him the mission to return to Ireland to convert the Irish to the True Faith.

Against his parents' wishes and their stories of the dangers he would face, he gave up his inheritance and said his goodbyes to his loved ones. He consecrated his heart and soul to God and returned to Ireland to bring the heart changing, life restoring Good News of Jesus to the people who had enslaved him.

What had gotten into Patrick? A fresh heart!

It is the life and ministry of Patrick that millions celebrate this very day, St. Patrick's day. What a far cry we have come from Patrick's fresh heart salvation story to a little leprechaun, green beer, parades, three leaf clovers and pinching people if they are not wearing green.

What's gotten into us?

In our scripture reading the prophet Ezekiel spoke for God to a people who had allowed their hearts and lives to get far from God. God was furious with them because their hearts and lifestyles had profaned His holy name. They had blackened his name among their family and friends and community.

God's answer! A new and fresh heart!

***"I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I'll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that's God-willed, not self-willed."*** (Ezekiel 36:26

Message bible)

A fresh heart!

Why was this a major concern for God? His people represented Him. Their heart had become hardened to His will and ways. They were self-seeking, self-willed and had allowed their hearts to become stale and crusted to the freshness of faith in God.

God had given the people the greatest commandment: ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength."*** (Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV)

The people's hearts were not in to living their lives fully for God. It was time for them to let a fresh heart get into them.

Earlier in the book of Ezekiel we find God again talking about a heart of stone, a divided heart. He desired to give them an **"undivided heart."** (Ezekiel 11:18-19) An undivided heart suggests a singleness of purpose in one's life. That purpose is to serve God faithfully and fully from one's heart...a fresh heart of faith. This new life, this fresh heart, can only come through God's Holy Spirit. We must recognize the hard heart that is in us, confess of it and return to Jesus.

When we allow a fresh heart to get into us we discover new motives, new guidelines and a new purpose for living. We will daily seek to do God's will and not our own. We will love God more than anything or anyone. We will serve Him by serving others. We will love others as He has loved us.

The prophet Joel reminded the people that this fresh heart is not reserved for a select few. He shared that God's spirit will be poured out on young and old alike who call on the Lord to save them and deliver them from themselves. (Joel 2:28-32)

The Apostle Paul had 4 different mission trips. After visiting and starting new churches he would often retrace his steps to see how they were doing in the faith. We find in the book of Acts that he went back to the people for the purpose to **"put a fresh heart into the disciples."** (Acts 18:23)

What's gotten into you?

Have you allowed God's Holy Spirit to put a "fresh heart" into you?

What does this fresh heart look like?

Lets do a comparison of a stone heart with a fresh heart!

## Attitude of the hearts!

### Stone heart

Dead  
Prideful  
Religious  
Insincere commitment  
Hypocritical  
Harsh  
Judgmental  
Cold  
Empty  
Luke-warm  
Divided  
Culturally diseased  
Bitter  
Whining

### Fresh heart

Alive  
Humbled  
Spiritual  
Sincere commitment  
True  
Fresh  
Understanding  
Vibrant  
Faith-full  
Passionate  
Undivided  
Holy healthy  
Praise  
Thanking

Which attitude of the heart has gotten into you?

I trust we will be honest and allow God's Holy Spirit to come and place in us a fresh heart of faith!

Before St. Patrick headed on his mission trip to Ireland he composed a prayer that has become known as "St. Patrick's Breast Plate." I would like to share that prayer with you and ask us to make it our "Prayer of a Fresh Heart."

I bind myself today  
God's Power to guide me,  
God's Might to uphold me,  
God's Wisdom to teach me,  
God's Eye to watch me,  
God's Shield to shelter me,  
God's Host to secure me,

Against the snares of demons,  
Against the lusts of nature,  
Against everyone who meditates injury to me,  
Whether far or near,  
Whether few or with many.

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,  
Christ in the fort,  
Christ in the chariot seat,  
Christ on the deck,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

St. Patrick took this prayer to his heart and into his life as he travelled all over Ireland being and sharing the love of Jesus Christ. A love that had gotten into him...into his heart!

What's gotten into you?  
The challenge is for us to daily pray this "Prayer of a Fresh Heart!"  
What's gotten into you?  
Allow God to put into you a fresh heart!