

Text: *Ephesians 1:18* . . .with the eyes of your heart enlightened

With the Eyes of Your Heart Enlightened

What an interesting phrase. We know that the ancients thought that the heart was the seat of emotions, of feelings. Here is Paul telling us that we should see reality through our hearts; which would be letting our emotions color what we are seeing. Folk literature tells us that there are all kinds of hearts. Anyone who has ever heard a country song has learned of wayward hearts, foolish hearts, and even soft and hard hearts. Paul, has a different notion: He wants us to see the world through *an enlightened heart*.

Which brings us to the question that Paul does not answer, what is an enlightened heart? You may well have your own definition, but it seems to me that it is composed of at least these four elements. The first of these is **empathy**. The ability to see more of a situation than just your own presence is the first part of empathy. The second is the ability to see the person as yourself; Perhaps with the codicil "there but for the grace of God, go I!" This act of wearing the shoes of another, is one basis for the enlightened heart.

The second is **understanding**. Empathy clarifies reality by adding a human dimension to your knowledge. This produces an understanding that goes beyond objective facts and produces a holistic view of the situation and the human interactions that you are participating in. This understanding augments the factual reality that you see. It is a more profound understanding than one normally experiences.

This shifts our perceptions and transactions towards the spiritual by creating an **inner awareness**. This is our mind wrapping itself around a person or action so that we have an intuitive grasp of what we and they are experiencing. It is like our understanding of cold. Having a cube of ice applied to our skin is first-hand knowledge of what cold does. Recognizing what cold does to another person, without having to know the degrees Celsius, is the mind wrap that constitutes inner awareness.

Completing and defining the enlightened heart is **love**. Paul gives us many definitions of love. His most often quoted passages are from *1 Corinthians 13* and *Colossians 3*. His comments on the importance of love are particularly powerful. "Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled. . . But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love."

So now we know what the enlightened heart is: Empathy, understanding, inner awareness and, above all and in all, love. What a powerful heart we have when it is enlightened! We then have only to see with it. And how our sight changes when directed by the heart enlightened!

Think about the power of seeing **inter-personal relationships** through the eyes of an enlightened heart. Oh, we will still make judgements, that seems to be part and parcel of the human condition, but we will make those judgements with empathy, understanding, awareness and, above all else, love. What a change in perspective! We might find that those people who annoy us the most are suddenly imbued with humanity. We would feel how their shoes pinch their feet, producing the kind of behavior that we

find unpleasant. With our understanding might come changes in the way we relate to that person. We might not change their behavior, but we would greatly reduce its negative hold on us. We might even be moved to help them find shoes that better fit their circumstances!

Our new and improved vision might even be applied to the community in which we live. We know all too well that hate sells. It seems to do particularly well in selling politicians to voters. But if we replaced hate with love, we might well see new connections with community members. We might even see the homeless, those who despair and those who are disadvantaged. What a transformation would come about if only we saw our civic lives through the enlightened heart of understanding and love.

Jesus charged us with loving our neighbor as ourselves and that the whole world was our neighbor. Using our new vision from our hearts enlightened, we might well see possibilities for peace and harmony where only war and division now exist. Instead of feeling powerless we should take a leaf from the wildlife conservationists who tell us to think globally and act locally. We would do well to change that to **pray globally, act locally**. In such a manner the very power of Jesus would be invoked on our behalf. We would be powerless no longer.

With the eyes of your heart enlightened – a new vision of Christian behavior. Amen.