

"HEART SURGERY"

(Acts 11:1-18)

(Heather Harrison)

Tension. Dumbfounded confusion. Injustice...I sit and watch it in full pixel color and I sense a stirring of attitudes and beliefs I thought only resided in history books. Surely I'm not the only one who feels like people are not speaking the same language. They are using words with letters and syllables that sound similar, but the core understanding of those words is different. Reminds me of the people long ago who built a tower--one of self-exaltation, pride, and rebellion--and the result was division and confusion.

That's what sin does, doesn't it? It impairs understanding, separates, and exalts one person over another...when sin enters the picture, confusion is right there with it. In our fallen world there is only One that can mend the brokenness we see on TV or feel in our own hearts. Political correctness can't change the heart; shoulds and shouldn'ts can't change the heart; rules, programs, and knowledge can't even change the heart. The only One that brings the change we so long for is Jesus Himself.

He is the only cure for a tower-loving, self-exalting people.

The only thing that changes these deeply embedded prejudices, intolerances, and indifferences is the cutting away of the flesh by the Savior Himself. Whether hatred or indifference, both are evidence of our own personal need of this life-altering heart surgery. The gospel of Christ that tells us His death did what we couldn't do and His resurrection gives new life that we didn't deserve is our only hope.

When God shines His light on sinners' hearts, He exposes truth for truth and lies for lies; He exposes the vast difference between what we say and what we actually hold to be true. And when those embarrassing attitudes are made visible, maybe only to me, I must bring them to the cross—the only thing that crucifies sin. I can no longer glaze over what He's revealed in me with a shiny coat of political correctness or knowledge of what I should think or feel. He has uncovered and laid bare this sin He died for and declares I must pluck it out, waging war on my own hypocrisy and prejudice before I can expect something different from others, moving us from mere tolerance of others to active love and care for others. If God Himself "rises to show compassion," (Is. 30:18) surely I can walk across the room to do the same.

This requires courage, tenderness, and compassion. It requires me to have empathy for others and a desire to understand before I can seek to be understood. No longer can we give pride or defensiveness a seat at the table.

Brokenness and humility precede healing and wholeness.

I must engage in the story that is playing out in front of me. I am forfeiting God's grace to me as an individual and to us as people if I am not applying His cross and, praise God, His resurrection to the story.

And if others wrong me, I know that they are people for whom my Savior died—their attitudes that offend me are no more offensive than the attitudes He has exposed in me.

We are a broken people in full need of a Savior to shine His light, expose our dross, and burn it away. I must be willing to see what He sees and be willing to let Him do the heart surgery on me before I begin to pray for real change in others.

Oh Lord, shine the light of your Spirit on us—burning away all that is not of You and illuminating all that is. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

Give us courage. Give us humility. Give us compassion. Give us You.

