“Search with All Your Heart”
Dr. Robert Bardeen
Ward Parkway Presbyterian
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Jeremiah 29:10-14, Proverbs 3:5-6

Listen for God’s Word!

Proverbs 3:5-6
5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
   and do not rely on your own insight.  
6 In all your ways acknowledge him,  
   and he will make straight your paths.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God!)

Here’s the verse from Jeremiah 29 that is our focus today.

Jeremiah 29:13
When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.

This Jeremiah passage that we have heard for several Sundays now becomes personal.

We all know the difference between giving our whole heart to something in comparison to being half-hearted. Half-hearted means you are uninterested in something or unenthusiastic about it. It shows. We feel it, don’t we?

When I taught Philosophy in several universities, I could tell when a student was half-hearted about their oral presentation or their essay answers. There was a lack of commitment. It was easy to see and feel and hear.

Sometimes I feel half-hearted about my personal devotions. Sometimes I’m just not with it. I can read the scripture reading and not remember what I read. I pray, but it feels like a rote prayer without conviction.

In the past I have preached some sermons that were half-baked. My heart was not in it. In fact, there have been times when I was about 5 minutes into the sermon, and I thought to myself: “This is not good. I should just quit. I wanted to honestly say to the congregation: ‘I did not think about this sermon enough. It would be better to just sing a hymn and go home.’” But I have to admit, I never have stopped.
In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, a letter is written to the church in Laodicea about being half-hearted.

Revelation 3:15-16 NIV
I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other. So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot or cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

What a convicting statement! “You are lukewarm.” It’s like drinking lukewarm coffee that isn’t hot enough or having lukewarm coke that isn’t cold enough. It’s like being lukewarm about your moral standards or lukewarm about your plans for Christmas.

A few verses later, the letter continues with one of the most dramatic and memorable moments in the Bible.

Revelation 3:19-20
19 I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. 20 Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

God wanted the people in Laodicea to stop being lukewarm. God wanted them to open the door for Jesus Christ to come into their lives.

Revelation 3:20 has been a meaningful verse for millions of people. It gives us a picture of what the Lord is doing and what we need to do. I have always felt that the Lord knocks at all of our doors all of the time. Christians and non-Christians! We can shut Jesus out of our lives so often. Christ wants in. Christ wants to eat with us. Christ wants to have fellowship with us. Christ wants our companionship.

One of the most famous sermons in the world is by a Presbyterian, Rev. Bob Munger. In 1951, Bob was at First Presbyterian, Berkley, California, and he preached “My Heart, Christ’s Home.” You can find it in a Christian bookstore or online free as a PDF. The sermon is a first person account of Bob inviting Christ into his heart and having Christ walk through the rooms of his heart. First, Christ goes into the Library of Bob’s heart. Then he enters the Dining Room. When Christ enters the Living Room, Bob describes a wonderful moment. I’ll read it to you.

_We walked next into the living room. This room was rather intimate and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a sofa, and a quiet atmosphere. He also seemed pleased with it. He said, "This is indeed a delightful room. Let us come here often. It is secluded and quiet, and we can fellowship together."_
Well, naturally as a young Christian I was thrilled. I couldn't think of anything I would rather do than have a few minutes with Christ in intimate companionship.

He promised, "I will be here early every morning. Meet me here, and we will start the day together." So morning after morning, I would come downstairs to the living room and He would take a book of the Bible from the bookcase. He would open it and then we would read together. He would tell me of its riches and unfold to me its truths. He would make my heart warm as He revealed His love and His grace He had toward me. These were wonderful hours together. In fact, we called the living room the "withdrawing room." It was a period when we had our quiet time together.

But, little by little, under the pressure of many responsibilities, this time began to be shortened. Why, I don't know, but I thought I was just too busy to spend time with Christ. This was not intentional, you understand; it just happened that way. Finally, not only was the time shortened, but I began to miss a day now and then. It was examination time at the university. Then it was some other urgent emergency. I would miss it two days in a row and often more. I remember one morning when I was in a hurry, rushing downstairs, eager to be on my way. As I passed the living room, the door was open. Looking in, I saw a fire in the fireplace and Jesus was sitting there. Suddenly in dismay I thought to myself, "He was my guest. I invited Him into my heart! He has come as Lord of my home. And yet here I am neglecting Him."
I turned and went in. With downcast glance, I said, "Blessed Master, forgive me. Have you been here all these mornings?"

"Yes," He said, "I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you." Then I was even more ashamed. He had been faithful in spite of my faithfulness. I asked His forgiveness and He readily forgave me as He does when we are truly repentant.

"The trouble with you is this: you have been thinking of the quiet time, of the Bible study and prayer time, as a factor in your own spiritual progress, but you have forgotten that this hour means something to me also. Remember, I love you. I have redeemed you at great cost. I value your fellowship. Now," He said, "do not neglect this hour if only for my sake. Whatever else may be your desire, remember I want your fellowship!"

You know, the truth that Christ desires my companionship, that He loves me, wants me to be with Him, wants to be with me and waits for me, has done more to transform my quiet time with God than any other single fact. Don't let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day find some time when, with your Bible and in prayer, you may be together with Him.

Let's put up the Jeremiah passage again for further review.
Jeremiah 29:13
When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.

The words - search and seek - are so important. What do they mean? Is there a difference between searching and seeking?

Searching seems to imply that something is lost. You search for a missing earring. You search for the $20 bill that fell on the ground. You search for a sock in your drawer or a left shoe or your favorite t-shirt. You enter Google to search for a restaurant. You search your heart why you are so crabby.

If you are going through a personal trial of searching for yourself, it means you think you are lost. If your son or daughter has been homeless for some time, you search for them. You carefully search when you dog is lost or your 4 year old wanders away in the grocery store.

And you search your heart for your true feelings about an event, a political campaign, a moment in history, or a person in the news.

You search. I search. We all search. In this verse, God says, “When you search for me, you will find me.”

Does that mean God is lost? No. Look at Psalm 139 with me.

Psalm 139:1-3 NIV
O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

This means God has searched me and knows me. God is right beside me. God is not lost. God is ever-present and knows everything about me, even my thoughts.

So, if God is not lost, then who is lost?

In 1973, after one year of ministry in a church in Iowa, we were on vacation in Ohio and attended worship with my wife’s parents. I was tired. I should say that I was exhausted.

It was a Methodist church that had roots in the old EUB denomination (Evangelical United Brethren). They had a tradition of having an altar call at the close of worship. I knew it was coming. It was not the first time we worshipped with them.
After the sermon, the pastor asked people to come forward to make sure about their relationship with Jesus Christ. Something hit me in the heart. It hit hard. I realized that I did not have a personal relationship with Christ. My home church in California only taught about God and being a good Christian. There was never any word about opening your heart to Christ. Never! I attended Princeton Seminary and somehow the matter of a relationship with Christ never came up.

I wanted to go forward, but I was sitting in between my wife and her parents. Pride settled in and I did not move. Not even a stir. But my heart spoke to my mind about emptiness.

When we returned home and I entered my office by myself, I knew I had to do something about that emptiness I felt. I got on my knees and invited Christ into my life for the first time.

God was not lost. I was lost! Christ had been knocking at my door many times, but it wasn’t until 1973 I was always an ordained Presbyterian pastor, I decided to open the door to Christ.

Was I searching for Christ? Yes, and God was searching for me. Christ was knocking. I opened the door and I was found.

And yes, I think there is a difference between searching and seeking. We seek in the attempt to find something. It doesn’t mean it is lost. You might be seeking help or seeking advice or seeking a solution to a problem or medical information or refuge from trouble. Maybe you seek permission from your mom to stay overnight at a friend’s house.

God is quite clear about seeking. If you seek God, you must do so with all your heart. It’s a spiritual problem if you are seeking God in a half-hearted way. I know the difference because I have done both ways. And it doesn’t feel good. I rarely tell anyone. I usually keep it secret because pastors are viewed as having everything together.

Look at Proverbs 3 again with me.

**Proverbs 3:5 NRSV**

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.

This verse is quite blunt and plain. Trust the Lord and do so with your whole heart. Don’t be half-hearted. Personally, I like the NIV translation better for the second part of verse 5:

**Proverbs 3:5 NIV**

Lean not on your own understanding.
Trust by leaning on God. You must lean on something. The warning is clear: If you lean on yourself, then you are half-hearted.

Here’s the last part of the passage:

**Proverbs 3:6**

6 In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

What does it mean to acknowledge God?

Acknowledge means to accept or admit the truth of something, or to recognize the importance of something. Or to admit something is real!

**Do you acknowledge God in your life?**

Do you accept God’s existence and seek to be a follower of Christ?

Let me close with a picture. Everyone knows the parable of the prodigal son. The younger son wants his share of his inheritance and gets it. He goes off and loses all of it through wild living. Then Jesus says, “He came to his senses.” He decides to return home. His father is so excited about his son’s return home and decides to throw a party for him. The younger son doesn’t know what to say, but the older son sure has plenty to say. He objects and will not attend the party. He complains to his father. **He doesn’t think the party is fair.**

Now, here’s the picture. The father is inside his home with light and joy and love and party-time. But his older son is outside with darkness and sadness and hate and a pity-party. Put in your mind, the father (as told by Jesus) leaving the light and going out into the dark.

**Why? Because he loves his oldest son.**

That’s the picture of God searching and seeking you. God is willing to leave the light and go into darkness, if that is where you are, and listen and speak to you about things that matter.

**Won’t you open the door?**

Let us pray.