**Text: Genesis 6:5-8**

**Subject: What’s At The Heart of The Matter?**

 As you know last week, we lost two giants in the civil rights movement: Congressman John Lewis, and C.T Vivian on the same day.

 And as I was giving honor by watching one of Rev. Vivian’s sermons, I came across one of his last. In that sermon, Rev. Vivian made the claim that the civil rights movement was more so a Spiritual movement than it was a movement for human and civil rights. I found that perspective to be intriguing especially since we are experiencing a resurgence of the same types of hatred and vitriol that was present before the movement in the 50s and 60s began.

 As a result, the more I thought about it, the more I felt compelled to look into why that is.

 First, according to Rev. Vivian, the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, and the US Constitution was amended to include the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments and other civil rights laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were promulgated. Then, we witnessed the election of the first African-American President in the history of the United States of America.

 At the same time, Rev. Vivian mentioned that the civil rights movement, as a Spiritual movement, is Spiritual, because God moves incrementally and progressively over a course of time.

For example, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued after 249 years of enslavement of African peoples in 1863-1865 including Juneteenth. Of course, that was a major accomplishment. Then, 100 years after that, the Civil Rights Acts were signed in 1963-1965. And yes, those too were major accomplishments.

Then, 40 years after that, when we elected President Barak Hussein Obama, certainly, that was a huge accomplishment

However, even with all those major accomplishments that were achieved over a protracted period of time, and even though, currently, confederate statues and monuments are being torn down, and they have retired the name of the Washington Football Team, racism, hatred with vitriol, and indifference still exists towards people of color, in a big way.

Therefore, we are left to conclude that something else must be going on for these complexities and atrocities to continue.

And that’s why I stopped by here today to ask you: **What’s At The Heart of the Matter?**

In order to answer this question, let us consider our text in Genesis 6. Here, we find the manifestation of the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden. At this point, by Chapter 6, things had gotten so bad, that God realized that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every imagination of the thoughts** **of his heart** was only evil continually.

Then, in verses 11-12, God determined that the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

In other words, here, we see that from the outset, sin corrupted the human heart so much to the point that God took drastic measures to cleanse the earth by destroying all of humankind to include every living thing, with the exception of Noah and his family, and a pair of every animal.

However, no sooner than the end of the flood, Noah showed signs that his heart was also corrupted even though he was chosen to replenish the earth because he was just and perfect in his generation.

We know this because in Genesis 9:21-27, we find Noah awakening from a drunken stupor speaking a curse over the sons of Ham. Specifically, in verse 25, Noah said, cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

And because of that, certain theologians have stood in ivy towers and in pulpits have used this one pericope of scripture as the basis to justify racism, classism, and colorism throughout the course of history.

As a result, corruption has begat corruption and people have been walking around with a sense of pseudo-superiority because their hearts are corrupted with fake news, and alternative facts.

Now, of course, this corruption is not reserved for one group of people because it is a universal human, Spiritual condition that we all suffer from in one way or another. However, what we do know is that it can infect groups of people, or entire nations, in specific ways.

For example, in Isaiah 1:4, the Prophet Isaiah said, ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone backward.

Here, we see that corruption can be passed down through the seed and can corrupt an entire nation. In fact, I would venture to say that--that is what has happened here in America.

The original sin of slavery, and pseudo-superiority has traveled down through the seed of its progenitors and has corrupted the hearts of many who, like Noah, don’t even know why they think the way they think or don’t know why they do what they do.

Today, I would like to submit that what’s at the heart of the matter is a corrupted heart. Therefore, let me take a minute to define my terms. Corruption is a state of moral contamination and spiritual decay expressed through disobedience to God.

This notion of corruption is what is also at the root of violence in our world; our country; and even our community. We know this because remember our text in Genesis 6:11 where God determined that the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

In other words, I am greatly grieved at the senseless violence that is rampant in the streets of DC and other large urban areas around the country. And I am equally grieved that this violence is largely found in African-American communities.

Now, that is not to say that our community is the only community filled with violence because if we think about war, there is nothing more violent than that.

And last I checked, I don’t know of anyone from a community of color, in this country, who has started a war with another country, even though recently, people of color have been the first to be sent to the front lines, in order to fight the wars that have been started by others.

Therefore, this is not about blaming anyone because the truth of the matter is-- this entire world, including this nation, has been corrupted by the seed of evil that can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Now, let’s press on the heart of the matter for a minute because we learned in Genesis 6:5 God realized that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Here, we see that God saw that corruption is a matter of the condition of the heart which is where the moral contamination and spiritual decay is expressed.

In this one scripture alone we see so much. We see that the heart is the center of life which is where the issues of life are derived; and that’s why in Proverbs 4:23, King Solomon told us to “keep [our] hearts with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

Therefore, if our hearts are morally contaminated with sin, then we find ourselves suffering from spiritual decay which will then cause us our hearts to generate imaginations that manifest in our thoughts which then will then influence what we ultimately do. God said, in Genesis 6:5, “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

In the Hebrew, imagination is defined as a thing or concept formed in the mind. In the Greek, it is defined as *logismos*, which is where we get the word logic from. Specifically, logismos is defined as a thought infused with evil intentions; not mere reasoning.

For Real, For Real, that’s what is at the heart of the matter. It is corruption that infuses our hearts with evil intentions which then travel to our minds in the form of imaginations that turn into actions.

Perhaps, that will help us today as we are all pondering what some people are thinking about when they do what they do. We say to ourselves, that just don’t make no sense. And certainly, it does not because these thoughts are not sensible. Instead, they are corrupt; and with this corruption evil will continue until they get tired; we get tired; or God gets tired of all of the evil being manifested in our world today.

Certainly, that’s what happened in our text, in Genesis 6—God got tired and took action because He knew that the heart of humankind had become so wicked and so corrupt that drastic measures had to be taken, by flooding the earth.

Now, the Good News is, God made a covenant with Noah and said in Genesis 9:11, I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

However, the challenging news is this: in 2 Peter 3:6-7, the Apostle Peter said, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men.

Then, in 2 Peter 3:10, Peter went on to say, but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Now, let’s pause for the cause here because this is where many people check out. Many people say there goes that preacher preaching fire and brimstone again. And there goes that preacher painting the picture of a mean and angry God.

Well, I certainly understand if you feel that way because none of us want to believe that God could get fed up enough with corruption that He will not take action against it. And, we know this is possible especially since He has already declared that “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

However, the truth is the truth and ultimately, if we take action upon it, it will make us free.

Now, let me say this. Even though the imagination of the hearts of humankind is inherently wicked, we still have hope. We can escape this corruption because we have The Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2 Peter 1:2-4, the Apostle Peter said, may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious promises,

so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Here, we see that we can escape corruption with the Knowledge of God; with God’s divine power; with God’s precious promises; which will provide us with God’s divine nature.

In other words, God has given us everything we need in order to be transformed from having an evil nature that is informed by a corrupted heart, to having a Divine Nature that is powered by His Divine Power, and informed by His precious promises.

However, as believers, it is not enough for us to completely rely on grace even though God gives it to us just because He is God. Instead, we do have some work to do so that we will not be influenced by the corruption of this world. And we should do this work because ultimately, we will have to give an account for it.

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, for we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether it be good or evil.

Now, according to 2 Peter 1:4, the work we have to do is to simply be partakers of the divine nature that God has made available to us. In the Greek, to be a partaker means that we are in *koinonos* which means that we are in fellowship with Christ. That also means that we are companions with God, through Christ Jesus. In the same sense, it is said that we share the same nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that sounds like a lot but really it’s not. All God is asking us to do is to spend some quality time with Him through prayer; and to believe, by faith, in all of His precious promises; and to surrender our hearts, our souls, and our minds to Him on a daily basis.

When we do, we will escape the corruption of this world. However, when we don’t, we may find ourselves being drawn by our own fleshly desires which will lead to corruption.

Perhaps that why the Apostle Paul said, in Galatians 6:7-9, be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

In other words, we have a choice to partake in God’s nature by sowing to the Spirit instead of sowing to the flesh; and what that really means is that we have to continue to partake in the tools that God has given us because with such, we will be able to escape corruption. However, if we chose to not partake in those things, then we may faint and thereby find ourselves partakers of the flesh.

Now, this is really Good news, because we all have an opportunity to get it right everyday even though we are subject to get wrong every day. And we know this is true because Romans 3:23 says, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

God knows that, and that’s why He’s given us grace and mercy.

God’s grace is what He gives to us even though we don’t deserve it. He gives it just because He is God.

And God’s mercy is what doesn’t give us what we do deserve.

And both God’s grace and mercy are given because He is love.

Therefore, even though what’s at the heart of the matter of evil is a corrupted heart, we have a way to escape and be partakers of God’s Divine Nature because of God’s love towards humankind.

We know He loves us because over 2,000 years ago, God so loved the world that He gave us his only begotten Son, that whosoever shall believe in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.

In other words, because of His love, He gave us a way to escape.

He even said in 1 Corinthians 10:13, there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye able; but with temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Church, our escape route is through Christ.

Because when they took Him up that hill to Calvary’s mountain;

The song writer said:

For God so loved the world

That He gave His only begotten Son

The Son gave His life for me

When He died on Calvary

There is no greater love

No love nowhere, no greater love

Than a man would lay down His life for a friend

No love nowhere, I've searched all over

There is no greater love

Ah, Jesus went to Calvary

To save a wretch

Like you and me

That's love!

They hung Him high

And They stretched Him wide

Then, He hung His head, and then He died

That's love,

However, that's not how the story ends

Because three days later, He rose again

Now, That's love!

In other words, when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross and was raised from the dead,

God gave us a way to escape the corruption that is in this world.

However, it is up to us to simply say yes, by being partakers of His Divine Nature through the knowledge of God, and through His precious promises,

And even more, to simply sway yes by believing in our hearts and confessing with our mouths, the Lord Jesus, that He died on the Cross and was raised from the dead, and we shall be saved.

Really, What should be **At the Heart of the Matter** is the Lord Jesus Christ living deep down in our hearts, and not the corruption that is in this world.

Amen!