

Sermon Title: Revealing the Treasures of Your Heart (Scripture is from ESV)

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 45:2-3

Introduction

Good afternoon. A few weeks ago I gave a message with the simple title of, “What Do You Want?” I shared some of the prophetic words and visions that have been released for this new church and I shared how I believe God is bringing us into a season where He is about to release answers to the prayers that we have been faithfully lifting up to Him. We are going to see the Spirit move in ways we have never witnessed before. During last week’s service a number of you were deeply ministered to through the release of prophetic words and prayer. One member, Cassandra, who didn’t even received prayer discovered her sinus congestion suddenly healed during the ministry time. Praise God! These were tastes of what is to come.

This is a church that hungers for more of the Lord. While the fellowship and love within this church is great, we don’t come just to see friends and go through the motions of a worship service. God has not set us in this area of Seoul to just “do church.” There are greater visions and plans for this church and for each of you as individuals as well.

The title of this message is, “Revealing the Treasures of Your Heart.” Please open your Bibles to Isaiah 45:2-3... I will be reading from the ESV...

Isaiah 45:2-3 – I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

In the New King James Version verse three reads, “I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places.”

The treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places... these the Lord desires to give to us. What exactly is God referring to though? While some may interpret this as referring to material riches, I believe God is calling us to claim this verse spiritually. I believe the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places refer to the jewels, the callings, the giftings, and the purposes within us. There are desires within us that we have yet to discover. There is strength, boldness, courage, and love within us that we have yet to see. Colossians 1:27 clearly says that Christ is within us, which is the hope of glory.

Let me explain more clearly...

Identity 101

When I have discipled brothers in the past one of my favorite things to do is have them pull out a notepad and a pencil and write down their identity. Who are they? And who does the world see them as?

For each it started simple with things like... “Korean-American, son, brother, teacher, Christian...” and soon they would share traits like, “listener, helper, artist, singer...” but as they would reflect more they would share things like, “prideful, trouble maker, critical, scatter brained, addict” and other traits. They were being honest... these were a part of their identity. And I think most people would have similar negative traits, with some a lot worse. For some of us there might have been one incident that shaped us powerfully... a teacher

calling us stupid, someone we admired calling us ugly or fat, or a secret sin that makes you feel dirty, hopeless, or unable to grow with God. This is exactly what Satan wants.

But are these identities true? Or should I ask it this way, **were these identities given to them by the world or by God?** Nearly all of these identities were given to them by the world. I consider them like dirt heaped over jewels. These are the identities that will cause a person to believe that they will never be someone special, at least not in God's sight. They feel too worldly. Too covered with the identities of the world.

I would watch my disciples as they would share the labels the world had given them along with their own labels of themselves from their sins and struggles. They would share with a somewhat sad look on their face, seemingly surrendered to their struggles and shortcomings.

I would then look at my disciples just as I look at the children at the orphanage I serve at. On the outside I would see both men and children marred by sin and by the cruel effects of the world. For some of them it seems like their anger or fear or insecurity or addictions to sin will never cease. Sometimes on the surface it's hard to see hope, but **God continues to remind me that He doesn't look to the outer appearance of a man but instead to his heart (1Samuel 16:7). You see, there is no anger or fear or insecurity or addiction to sin in heaven.** These symptoms and sins are a result of both the world and our flesh. Both of these things, the world and our flesh, are temporary. We worship a God who is eternal.

It's at this point that I tell my disciples, "Okay, now write down how God sees you according to His Word."

Psalms 139:14 says that we were fearfully and wonderfully made. Isaiah 43:4 says we are precious and honored in God's sight. Isaiah 63:3 says that we are a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord. Deuteronomy 14:2 and many other verses in the Bible tell us that we are God's treasured possession.

Do you know your identity in God? As my disciples would write down that they are a son of God, that they are a new creation in Christ, that they are dead to sin and alive in Christ, and identity after identity... I would watch as hope would rise up within them. They were beginning to touch on the real truth and the real purposes of themselves. They were beginning to unearth the treasures within them that the identities of the world had tried to cover over.

Rejects and Rebels

But these treasures are not limited to our identity in God. Many of our worldly identities and even struggles are just waiting to be touched and redeemed by God.

There are some kids from the orphanage I serve at who seem corrupt to their core. I notice they are always angry, complaining, stealing, and cursing. I would pray for them and in my mind I couldn't see much hope for them. But then I would feel God's Spirit speak to me. And He would say, "Where you see anger, I see a warrior spirit and a passion for me that will not relent." "Where you see insecurity and depression, I see a sensitive and empathetic soul who will care for the broken." "Where you see a child deeply scarred by his past and the pain he has endured, I see a child who understands the heart of the broken and will strengthen and speak life into those suffering."

Every time I would see dirt and despair, God would see riches and hope. He is a redeeming God. He made us fearfully and wonderfully. A glorious God made us in His glorious image. He sees through the dirt the world tries to cover us in. He sees into the treasures within us.

David in the Bible had to run away from King Saul. He was alone at first, but soon men began to join him. This is how they are described...

1Samuel 22:2 – And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men.

Men in distress, in debt, and bitter in soul. Are these the men you would desire to lead and fight with? And yet later in the Bible we read of the extraordinary exploits of these men. God used them in amazing ways!

And what of Jesus? His disciples included fishermen, a tax collector, and a Zealot, who is a revolutionist and a rebel of Rome. These men were the rejects and rebels of society. All throughout the Gospels we read of their foolishness and failures. Why did Jesus choose these men? Through the Spirit, Jesus saw through their shortcomings and their struggles. Jesus saw treasures within these men just waiting to be released. He knew that through these men the world would be turned upside down. And so Jesus kept encouraging them, teaching them, and praying for them.

And so you hear these stories how God redeemed broken, rejected, and bitter men and used them to establish mighty kingdoms, one of Israel and the other of the Christian church. It's wonderful that God redeemed these men and used them in ways that baffled the world that continued to want to identify them as uneducated men, but what about us? Are there treasures within us? Can God redeem our sins and our brokenness and reveal the true riches within us?

Power to Change

Now I am going to give you a quote that I want you to write down. This is a good word...

“You get saved when you believe in God. You’re changed when you realize He believes in you.”

Let me say that again, “You get saved when you believe in God. You’re changed when you realize He believes in you.”

So many Christians I meet profess faith in God and sincerely want to love Him more, but they continue in their sin and in their struggles. They believe in God and know that God is wonderful, but when they look at themselves they see the same person they were before they professed faith in God. They see the same struggles, the same identity. And they feel hopeless. They are saved, but they are not changed.

But then some of these Christians begin to claim the identities God speaks to them in Scripture. They begin to receive encouragement and truth through other brothers and sisters in Christ. They begin to hear God's voice, and His voice isn't condemning or angry but is rather loving and gentle. And the transformation begins. Who were once broken, hopeless, and frustrated believers then become citizens of heaven, more than conquerors, set free by the truth of God.

Lydia's Testimony

Within this room here are so many lives who have been marred by broken homes and sins of the youth. But God is a redeemer. I wish I could have every member of the church plant team share with you their stories of how God has redeemed them, and hopefully you will soon hear them all. Today though I've asked our sister Lydia to share her testimony with us of God's redeeming and freeing touch in her life...

I am righteous.

I am right.

I am precious.

I have been crowned with glory and honor.

I am loved.

I wanted to be free. "Lord, I want to be free. I want to be free. Please Lord. Please." Being in the grips of binge-eating disorder and depression and unable to free myself from the oppression I was under, this was the prayer that I prayed for three years. "God, I want to fly. I don't want to crawl through life anymore. I want to fly freely. Lord, I want to fly! I want to be free. I want to be happy." I was filled by the Holy Spirit. But the disorder and depression came back in full force. I was prayed for over and over and over again. Still, I had times when I could not get up from my bed for days. And there were many times when I felt like I was a hopeless case, that I was someone who would never be able to live in freedom, that living in misery was my destiny. I got tired of my own misery that I often contemplated about committing suicide, and the only thing that kept me from following through was fear. Why couldn't I be happy?

Even as a child, I think I was depressed. My home environment was a place of anger, violence, fear, exclusivity, and instability. I remember that I used to hate sunlight, and I would always seek out the dark corners of the house. I remember I really wanted to cry, but I never could because I felt like my sadness was nothing compared to my mother's. So, I got used to separating myself from my emotions and crying alone in the bathroom, which was my haven. I grew up fearful of my dad's unpredictable temper, his physical violence, and his words of hatred and burdened by my mom's sadness and suffering, a burden I felt was my responsibility to carry. In my family, I hungered for attention, love, and acceptance. All I wanted was to feel safe and protected. Not feeling like I was walking on eggshells every day, but truly feeling like I could rest.

The things that I experienced at home shaped my identity, and at the core of who I was, I lived with a deep sense of shame. Something was wrong with me. Why else would my dad beat my mom and have affairs? Something was wrong with me. Why else would my brother who doted on me so much withdraw his love? Something was wrong with me. Why else would a man that I sincerely believed I loved and who loved me betray me? Why else would I end up with an eating disorder and depression? I was wrong. All wrong. And because I lived with such deep shame, I compensated by trying to be perfect. Perfect in how I related to people. Perfect in my studies. Perfect in how I related to God. I never measured up to my expectations. When I felt even the slightest lack of intimacy between God and myself, I racked my brain trying to figure out what I had done wrong, and I would fervently ask for forgiveness. My relationship with God and with other people was driven by fear and insecurities, and I could not rest, not even in the presence of the Lord.

Then, one day God whispered to me, "Lydia, I love you just the way you are." It really was a whisper, but God was in it. His love. His healing. His redemption. His rest. From this point on, God started to break bondages off of my life, one after another-

eating disorder, depression, fear, shame, and perfectionism. I started to see that I'm okay. That, really I'm okay, and I am not wrong, but I'm both righteous and right. That I have an eternal Father who loves me beyond imagination just because He loves me. That I am not cursed but blessed. That I am a child of delight not suffering.

I felt like my healing and deliverance session was a summation of all that the Lord had been doing in my life, and as soon as I walked into the session, I felt overwhelming peace, relief, and a sense of arrival. I experienced a new way of closure. God showed me that I can find healing, love, and closure within a community of loving brothers and sisters. I always found closure and healing alone. I always cried alone. But even at the cost of risking my heart, the Lord wanted to show me the right way of going about things. He wanted me to know that love and acceptance are available, that I can be loved for who I am, not only by Him but also by people. He wanted to show me that there will be people who cry with me, who will not think that I am shameful and untouchable, but rather who will embrace me for who I am.

God is good. And I am happy. I am righteous and right. The Lord calls me good. He calls me His beloved. There is nothing righteous, holy, or humble about believing that I'm shameful and unlovable. There is nothing heroic about being less than what God has called me to be. I testify to the goodness of the Lord, to His faithfulness, and to the love of my brothers and sisters that has allowed me to come to the point of writing this testimony. I am free.

Praise God! I have had the privilege of watching Lydia transform from who she once was into who God has called her to be. God has been releasing a strength and steadfastness within her that I don't think she ever thought she had. I've noticed Lydia has been quick to pick up on someone who is down or struggling and take them aside to encourage them and pray for them. Just as God has used other brothers and sisters to speak life into Lydia and help her discover the treasures within her, God is now using Lydia to speak life into so many others and help bring forth the beautiful riches within them. And God has more much to reveal for Lydia.

2Corinthians 3:18 – And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Transformation doesn't end with professing your faith in God. It doesn't end with overcoming a certain sin or struggle. It doesn't even end with a powerful revelation and strengthening from God. Scripture says that we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another. The NIV says **we are being transformed with ever-increasing glory**. Ever-increasing glory. God is limitless and lives within us. That means the treasures within us are limitless. We are never to reach a ceiling in our faith. Satan and the world try and tell us we can only change so much or do so much. But Jesus tells us we will do greater things than He did (John 14:12). This truth is for each and every one of you.

Desires of the Heart

For my own life I grew up in a Christian family. I really began seeking God early in college and began to delight in Him more and more with each year. There was a verse that stood out to me as I grew with God, and it is Psalm 37:4...

Psalm 37:4 – Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

I wondered then what exactly God would give me. Back when I was 21, if God had given me the desires I had at that time then I would be married, with a nice engineering job, a decent house, and some kids. That's what I wanted then. But what I didn't know was that those things I wanted were not the true desires of my heart. Just as the world tries to put different labels and identities over us, **the world also tries to put desires on us that cover the treasures within us.** But as we submit ourselves to God and allow His Spirit to work within us, He reveals what He has truly created us for.

Now I live here in Korea and serve full time at a children's home. I also direct an orphanage ministry and am a lay pastor of a church that meets in a bar. I am the director of a healing and deliverance ministry and I have deep love and calling for North Korea. If you were to tell me when I was 21 what I would be doing now, I would have never believed you. I never wanted to be a pastor. I never liked kids much growing up. I didn't even know where North Korea was in the world. But now I would not trade my life for any other. God has been revealing desires within me that I never knew I had. I love what I'm doing now and I have a huge heart for my kids. God has also been enabling me to do things that I always wanted to do but never thought would be possible, like counseling people by the truth of God and the power of the Spirit into freedom of heavy addictions and deep trauma. God is so good!

Treasures of Itaewon

When you realize that God believes in you, and as He begins to transform you and reveal the treasures of your heart, a desire springs up within to help others experience this love and transformation as well. This is one of the callings I believe God is releasing into our church: **To claim the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places.**

The prostitutes, the homosexuals, the Muslims, and the alcoholics around us in this area are all made in God's image. They are all fearfully and wonderfully made. Within them are unique desires God has given them that the world has tried to cover up or misconstrue. God has set us here in King Bar upon this hill for a purpose. God is about to increase His love, His presence, and His anointing in us in such a measure that no matter how dark a person may seem on the outside by God's light we will see the treasures within them. Amen?

But I believe God wants to touch you first. There are so many treasures here that I am so excited to see revealed. God's love never fails. God is about to take you into deep intimacy with Him that you perhaps never felt worthy or able of. I want to encourage you to join a house church. Through the fellowship and prayer God is going to speak deep into your life. The treasures hidden within you are going to begin to be revealed.

When I look upon this church I see both an army and a family. I see different backgrounds, but one love. I see power and strength in each and every one of you.

God loves you all so much. He has blessed plans for you. He has plans in store for you that you would have never thought possible. God is about to remove every identity and desire the world has put over you and reveal the hope of glory living within you. God believes in you!

Pray Spiritual eyes opened. Treasures revealed.

Itaewon's History (New Philadelphia Itaewon meets in King Bar in Itaewon, Seoul)

Itaewon is probably the most diverse place in Korea where there seems to be more foreigners than native Koreans. Although this can be attributed to the presence of the American military base, it does not fully explain the reason behind such an extensive foreign population. However, Itaewon's history shows that it has always had a connection with foreign nations.

Firstly, during the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592 (in Korean, "Imjinwaeran"), the Japanese army decided to station their army in the Itaewon area. During this time, Japanese soldiers gang raped the women monks at a Buddhist temple in Itaewon. Many of these women became pregnant, and even as the Japanese army retreated, many women were raped. The Korean government decided to gather all the women and children into one area, which was Itaewon. They even built a kind of orphanage there for the children. The first Chinese character of the name "Itaewon," "I" or 'O|" means "different" or "foreign." The Chinese character "Tae" or "태" means "to become impregnated," and the last character "Won" or "원" means "house." Therefore, Itaewon means something along the lines of "The house of the foreign-born." Later on, the Chinese characters were changed to something else about how Itaewon has a lot of peach trees, but the original name was as mentioned above.

Secondly, in 1880, when Korea was being threatened by internal military division, the Korean government requested Chinese forces to come and help them put down the rebellion. The Chinese forces landed in Inchon and moved to Itaewon where they decided to station their army. Once again, during their stay, they pillaged the town and raped the women.

Thirdly, in 1910, when Japan annexed Korea, once again Japanese military headquarters was located in Itaewon. After Japan left Korea, America stationed their troops in Itaewon instead and has been there ever since.

Our church here in King Bar is set on a hill with two well known alleyways on either side. On one side is Hooker Hill: the main red light district in Seoul, catering mainly to U.S. servicemen. On the other side and also on the street in front of the bar is Homo Hill: an area full of gay bars and transgender bars. Most of these places also cater to foreigners, especially U.S. military soldiers. Although Korean policemen and U.S. MPs patrol the area, they usually turn a blind eye to what is going on and rarely question gay service members. Therefore, many gay soldiers find Itaewon to be the perfect place to come out and openly indulge in their gay identity. Also behind our church higher up on the hill is the largest Muslim mosque in Korea. We have quite a location.

I was told by a church attendee last week that earlier in the morning around 8am her friend went to one of the stores on our hill. Her friend saw an ambulance and a team tending to someone and also saw four different people passed out on the sidewalks. This is an area that needs Jesus. This is an area that needs God's light to shine through the darkness.