

MATTERS OF THE HEART, PART 6

“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 11:19, NIV)

HERE IS A SMALL PARABLE. In a large city blessed with many opportunities for recreation, a rundown municipal course was oddly juxtapositioned against a high-end country club. Driving through the area, you knew you were coming up on the muni because you could see its dirt-lined fairways through a chain-link fence. But the country club was surrounded by a high wall, crafted of beautiful stone.

An old golfer had spent his whole life playing the muni. It was all he could afford, but it was also what he had grown used to. He was comfortable there. But one day, as he emerged from his dinged-up sedan in the muni parking lot, a stranger approached him and said, “Wait a moment, my friend. Let’s not take your clubs out of the car here. Let me instead lead you across the way. I want you to play at my course today. In fact, I want you to play there everyday.”

You know where this story is headed, don’t you? It’s headed right through the gates of that fine country club. That old golfer was graciously given unmerited privilege to play where the grass was green and the greens rolled pure.

The old man was delighted, of course. But he also had memories. And it was not long before the fellow took to doing the most curious thing. When he came to the point on the course nearest the muni, he would sidle over to the wall, climb up on an old tree stump, stand on his tiptoes, and peer over the wall. He wondered what good things were happening where he used to “live.” He knew in his heart of hearts that not one bit of it was better than where he was now, but he turned his back on all the present wonder to snatch glimpses of the old.

The words of God through the prophet Ezekiel reveal that those who have come into saving contact with the Lord of glory have gone from death to life. Our old hearts were made of stone—inanimate and incapable. Our new hearts are made of flesh—alive and productive. From the day this happens, however, resistance comes from the old guard. This was *our* will, *our* command, and we have given our affections to another. The tug is strong. We must fight the urge to spend our days gazing back over the fence. The beauty of salvation is before us, not behind. The joy of eternity is yet to come. Thank God for your new heart. Then let it beat. Live in the life it gives.

Opening questions What is ugliest golf course you have ever played? the nicest? Describe the difference. • What are some key evidences of a new life in Christ?

READING Ezekiel 11:18-21; Colossians 2:13-15; Colossians 3:1-17

New hearts (Ezekiel 11)

What traits and actions allow us to identify those whose hearts are new in Christ? What part of this work is done by God? What part is done by us?

God’s great work (Colossians 2)

According to the passage, what several things does God do in changing us?

‘Set your hearts’ (Colossians 3)

Beginning with verses 1 and 2, what things do we do—general and specific—because God has given us a new heart?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/hOsTx8CcOjs>