

Stilling Prayer: The eye of the heart

Some of you may know the worship song, 'Open the eyes of my heart Lord' that goes,

Open the eyes of my heart Lord
Open the eyes of my heart
I want to see you
I want to see you.

I have been musing on the state of my spiritual heart since talking with a Hindu friend about my awareness of God's love. I was shocked when she, I think rightly, suggested that what I was describing was simply head knowledge, not the deeper awareness of God's love embracing my heart and soul that I had also claimed. Now I am asking God to open up my heart, as the song says.

The 'eyes of the heart' though is a curious expression, isn't it? It comes from Ephesians 1:17-19 where Paul writes:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ***I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened*** in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

I like this image of the light-receiving spiritual eye of the heart to see what can't be seen with the naked eye; the riches of his glorious inheritance. Yet, it can be hard to trust in what can't be seen, when our culture has us wary and suspicious.

There is a profound children's book, 'The Little Prince', that tells of a prince who has fallen in love with a rose. In it, the fox assures the little prince that 'it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.' The rose matters to him and, when he can't see her with his bodily eyes, he can still see her - with the eyes of the heart as it were. Isn't that lovely? Somehow it encourages me. It also reminds me that to see with the heart is often to be wounded: the rose did not reciprocate his love - or at least played hard to get!

I am sure that simply desiring more spiritual sight delights God. The desire in itself shifts my gaze from the world and its problems to Christ. So as I desire, I seek, and that is like opening the eyelids of this inner heart.

I find it hard to be vulnerable; to open my heart to God isn't easy, though I desire it. It is rather like feeling fine but asking to have heart surgery. What a journey of trust. I can't even set off down that route without God's help. No wonder Paul prays to God for the Ephesians (3:16-19) asking that God 'may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.'

I have so often read that passage but don't think I have appreciated that knowing the love that surpasses knowledge comes from having Christ dwell in my heart. It is certainly not head knowledge! It is also a reminder that it is by God's grace that the indwelling occurs. So I am wondering where this will take me, and where this might take you too.

Leading us into prayer

Open the eyes of my heart Lord

Open the eyes of my heart

I want to see you

I want to see you

Leading us out of prayer: a prayer of Scott Brennan

Lord Jesus, when I cannot see the way ahead, teach me to trust you.

When I am tempted to rely on my own understanding,

Help me to depend upon your wisdom.

Open the eyes of my heart that I may recognise your presence,

in every season and follow you with confidence,

Even when the path is hidden. Amen.