

Unto Whom All Hearts Be Open

Heb 4:12-13

Bernard Bell



Background

The ancient Collect for Purity prayed early in the Eucharist service of the *Book of Common Prayer* begins thus: Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. Is that a comforting thought or a scary thought? David wrote, “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me,” then he dared to ask God to do so again: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts” (Ps 139:1, 23). God’s living, powerful word penetrates into our deepest being, exposing us before his gaze. Will we survive his examination? Do we want him to know our heart?

Sermon Text: Heb 4:12-13 (NIV)

¹² *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* ¹³ *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- b. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- c. What was the best thing you heard during the service this week?

2. Sunday questions

- a. Bernard's sermon revolved around the Collect for Purity. This Collect was part of his liturgy as a child. Bernard said, "Liturgy is important because repetition leads to memory." How do you respond to this comment, especially given that PBCC is a "low-liturgy" church?
- b. This text contains five attributes of the Word of God:
 - *Alive*
 - *Active*
 - *Sharper than any double-edged sword*
 - *Penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow*
 - *Judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*
 - Which one speaks to you the most? Why?
- c. "Today is the day to hear God's voice."
 - Where do you typically go to hear his voice?
 - Where do you gather with others around God's Word?
- d. Bernard used Adam and Eve as examples of what not to do when we hear God's voice. They were faithless and disobeyed. He used Jesus and Moses as examples of faithfulness and obedience in times of testing. Will you be faithful and obey today? Make this your prayer this week – that the Holy Spirit would guide you into all faithfulness and obedience.
- e. The Collect for Purity is this:

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

What would you say is your greatest desire? Is it to be comfortable or is it to "perfectly love God"?