

Where is God Written In Your Heart

March 17, 2024

Prayer: God of ancient story and present moment may the words I offer in reflection, be acceptable to you and echo your wisdom in our time. Amen

As someone who is still working on understanding smart technology, I continue to be amazed at the resources I have at my disposal with something as small as my smartphone. Not a week goes by that I don't discover some new application that delivers on its promise to make my life so much easier.

For example, it's actually been a couple of years since I discovered the "Notes" application on my smartphone. Most of you were likely way ahead of me in this discovery, but the capability I have with this app to jot down names and numbers and notes of all kinds has been nothing short of miraculous. There's no telling how much scrap paper, envelopes and post-it notes have been saved because I can now take my smartphone and "tap, tap, tap" to jot something down for safekeeping.

I know I can't be alone in feeling this enormous sense of gratitude for this fancy tech. Many of you will remember what it was like, not that long ago when you had to look for something to write on because you couldn't trust yourself to remember an important detail. Many of you will remember searching for a scrap of something when on the phone - which was attached to the wall - and you only had so much cord - and you had the receiver under your chin but you had an appointment time to remember. Looking back on all of the improvisations we came up with during those days, well we were a creative bunch. I remember that when all else failed we would write on our hand. Did you ever do that? Did you ever find it necessary to write down a name or a number, an address or a measurement on your hand? It probably made you feel a little silly to do so, but you have to admit that it did the trick and you were able to hold on to that information for as long as you needed it. Of course, that's an option that is less in vogue these days given we've being instructed to wash our hands fifty times a day. In this new age we look for other ways to keep important matters not just close at hand, but also close at heart.

This tendency for things to slip away from us has evidently always been a concern going back in time even to the days of the prophet Jeremiah. **As in our day, the people in Jeremiah's day struggled to hold on to vital matters.** For them, as for us today, life constantly seemed to get in the way of essential concerns. If they didn't come up with a way to preserve them they couldn't guarantee that those essential concerns wouldn't get lost in the shuffle of their everyday lives.

In this section of Jeremiah's prophecy, that we read from today, Jeremiah is addressing the exiles in Babylon, the people who were taken out of Jerusalem when the city fell to the forces of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It is part of a section that students of the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible call "the Book of Consolation," a series of short salvation messages, which taken together, pointed the exiles beyond their sadness and

worry of never getting out of Babylon. Jeremiah's hopeful news came to them at a time when Jerusalem was but a faint memory and the notion of being God's Chosen People was on the verge of slipping away.

Jeremiah offered words of encouragement about how God was about to do something that only God could do – an act of deliverance that would draw the people back into relationship – something to help them remember what was slipping away from them.

“The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant...’ declares the LORD. ‘This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel...’ declares the LORD. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.’”

Did you hear what God said to the exiles? “I will make a new covenant...and will write it on their hearts.” **God will do something only God can do that will draw the people back – will help them remember God.** (A covenant that is written down on tablets of stone can be lost or broken or set aside to be ignored). **But a covenant that is written down on the heart is one that will last forever.**

This is the sort of God we have been called upon to worship and serve in our time – a God who is merciful and kind, a God who is faithful and true, a God who never gives up on us, a God whose love is so steadfast and constant that it ultimately finds a way to bring people back to where God is so that they can be God's people again, even when they have nearly forgotten.

I think that in the life of every believer the time comes when God stamps something on our hearts that we never could have written by ourselves so that for the rest of our days upon this earth and all the way into eternity we are captivated by this love that simply will not let us go. Would you agree?

Have you had that sort of experience? Has God laid something on your heart that gives you the assurance that you are not alone?

Where has this God written upon your heart?

Maybe it is in the tune of a hymn or a line in the chorus.
Maybe it's there in the voice of a love, or the giggle of a child.

Maybe it's found in the warmth of a sunbeam or the breeze against your skin.

Maybe you can smell it in the wet earth of the garden or the bread baking in the oven.

Maybe you know it in the silence or in the storm.
Maybe you know it in the sunrise or the sunset.

Maybe you know it in this place, when the piano starts to set the tone, or the minister says something silly or the children clamor to the front or the scripture lesson is read or choir starts to sing or the Jesus prayer is prayed or the benediction is given.

Where is God written upon your heart?

If you're here this morning because God seems to be slipping through your fingers and hope for this broken world, or for what might be broken in you is fading.

If you are weary from laboring under the impossible burden of trying to remember all that you think you need to be doing in order to earn God's favor.

Take Heart. No, let me rephrase that.

Let God take your heart

and write upon it

in ways you will never be able to forget.

Amen

Rev. Debra Berg