

The Love of God Written Upon Our Hearts

5th Sun. in Lent – 03/21/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Jeremiah 31:31-34 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 33, [The LORD says,] **“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”**

Introduction

- ✘ I think all of us know in our heads what it means to suffer a broken heart ... and many of us know it in our hearts as well.
 - ➔ Sometimes a broken heart comes as a result of unrealistic hopes or expectations – like when a young man sets his heart upon a young lady who never returns his affection.
 - ➔ Sometimes a heart is broken by death – when a loved one leaves this earthly life.
 - ➔ But the most common, and possibly most deeply, broken heart occurs because of broken promises; like when a fiancé or even a spouse has made a vow of love but then breaks that covenant of engagement or marriage. When these kinds of covenant promises are broken, it can be very difficult – if not impossible – for that heart to ever love again.
- ✘ I'm sure some of us here have suffered that kind of broken heart; that kind of pain. And so has our Lord.
 - ➔ But here's where there is a huge difference between us and God. Where we find it such a great challenge to love again, we are eternally grateful that even in His own pain God's love for us is unbreakable and so very, very great.
 - ➔ How is He able to do that? Well, it is because His love is perfect to begin with, while ours is always flawed. And second, only God's love has the power to repair broken hearts. That means that it is only through His love that you and I are ever able to love again after our hearts have been broken.
- ✘ Today God declares to you and me, through the prophet Jeremiah, that He pours His very own perfect and healing love into our hearts. Yes, because He always keeps His promises as we find them in His Word, so God writes His unfailing love upon our hearts.

I. God's people break His First Covenant & His heart

- ✘ In verses 31-32 of our Old Testament Reading God refers to the need for a “New Covenant” with the “house of Israel” because they broke the one that He made with them when He loved them and brought them out of their slavery in Egypt. Yes, this is the LORD Himself revealing to His people that they have broken His heart.
 - ➔ So what was the problem? Was there something wrong with that old covenant? Of course there was nothing wrong on God's end of the covenant. From the very beginning God was faithful to His people; He never turned away from them and never ceased to be their God.
- ✘ As He says, He's the one who brought them out of slavery; out of the land of Egypt. He is the one who freed them from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh.
 - ➔ In verse 32 God points out that He had been a faithful “husband” to His people; a loving provider as they wandered through the wilderness and entered into and lived in the Promised Land that He had given to them.
 - ➔ Yes, the LORD provided them freedom, food from heaven like manna, quail, and water, and protection and victory over all of their enemies.

- ⊗ It is the people who refused to acknowledge God and live faithfully toward Him. In verse 32 God says straight out that “they broke” His covenant with them. How did they do that? Actually, the easier thing to answer would be how did they keep God’s covenant? Simply put – they didn’t. They broke it in every way possible.
 - ➔ They were ungrateful and selfish in offering up empty sacrifices to the LORD. They worshiped other gods – both those of the nations they came into contact with and the many so-called “gods” that they made with their own hands. They were cruel and unloving toward each other.
 - ➔ By breaking God’s covenant, they broke God’s heart; the One who loved them so dearly that He poured His whole self into caring for them.
- ⊗ It is because of this sinful rejection and betrayal that God’s people, at the time of our text in the book of Jeremiah, find themselves in the midst of great suffering.
 - ➔ It was out of love that the LORD had to do the painful thing; the thing that no loving parent ever wants to do with His children. He had to discipline them. He cast them out of the Promised Land through the actions of an evil king, Nebuchadnezzar who conquered and destroyed their city and God’s temple and took them into captivity far away in Babylon.
 - ➔ If you don’t think that broke God’s heart, than you don’t know God and His unfathomable love for His people!
- ⊗ What about now? Do you think God’s heart breaks over each one of us as well today? Undoubtedly it does.
 - ➔ Certainly He is grieved whenever His believers are physically harmed or even murdered because of their Christian faith as we see happening still today in many parts of the world. Even here in the U.S., the Lord’s heart aches when our government and others try to say that business owners or Christian Schools or individuals are not allowed to freely confess their faith in Christ, or to live in a manner consistent with the truths of God’s holy Word in Scripture.
 - ➔ Even in non-spiritual matters, the Lord’s heart aches when you or I are treated poorly and suffer broken hearts that are not our own fault.
- ⊗ But, we – we also break His heart directly in the myriad of ways that we break His covenant. Just think of all the ways that you and I break the First Commandment and worship the gods of others around us and the gods that we have created ourselves. Anything at all that we put before God and His Word is a false god – things like our work and possessions, and friends, and family, and entertainment, and technology, and fear, and influence, and personal pleasure, and money, and free time, and so-called “personal rights”, and being popular, and so much more.
 - ➔ Beyond that we still break God’s covenant and heart when we sin and do harm to others in ways that break their hearts. Gossip, telling lies, acting like a bully, taking what is not ours, being disrespectful to parents and teachers and others who are in authority – so many of these things are not even considered to be wrong in our current culture, and yet they break the heart of our Lord because they break the law of love that He has given us all in His covenant – the Ten Commandments.

II. God Promises to Make a New Covenant

- ⊗ In spite of all of this though, God remains faithful to us. He loves us still, to the point that He promises to “remake” His covenant with His people in a “new” way, in a manner that is radically different.

- God directed Jeremiah to communicate a promise to His people as they were living under discipline in Babylon. He said in verse 31 that “the days are coming” when He will make a “new covenant” with His people.
- It will be “after those days”, he says in verse 33; after the days of suffering in exile that lasted 70 years that it would begin. Yes, God is promising that an end to the punishment will come and His people will be returned to the Promised Land to receive new and complete blessings from the LORD.
- ✘ This “new covenant” will bring about a time of great transition for God’s people. Not only will they be allowed to return to the Promised Land to resume life and begin to live again as the faithful people of God; but this covenant will usher in a new relationship with God; one that will deeply impact their lives of worship, sacrifice, service, and prayer.
 - God says that now the “law” of God will be instilled in their hearts in a way where they will actually have a deep willingness to live as God’s people.
- ✘ But the reality of this new attitude would not come immediately upon the people. Instead God promises that it is on its way. His promise found fulfillment in the incarnation of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.
 - As God took on human flesh and entered our world through His mother Mary; and later came again by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, so God came to live in the hearts of His people, the Church.
- ✘ The ultimate, complete fulfillment of this new covenant is promised when He brings all of His redeemed people into the eternal kingdom of His glory in heaven.
 - For now though, as you and I and other Christians struggle with the temptations and results of our sin; and even as we reflect more intensely upon what our sin required of Jesus during this season of Lent, we might view our time right now today as a form of captivity as well.
 - But as we do consider God’s love for us in sending Jesus – and especially as we consider the seriousness of our sin in breaking God’s heart and covenant, we turn in repentance to reflect upon Jesus’ victory over sin, death, and the forces of evil in this world as He alone is the essence and fulfillment of God’s “new covenant”.

III. God’s “law” written in our hearts.

- ✘ As I said earlier, this “new covenant” brought a radical shift from that of the old covenant. Where the old covenant, which is still good and righteous, because it came from God in love; where it was dependent upon God’s people being able to fulfill their part of the law, the new covenant exists precisely because God knows that His people have failed and always will.
 - And so He remakes a “new covenant” where in verse 33 He says, “I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts”.
- ✘ This law is the law God’s grace and the Good News of Jesus coming into our world to do in our place what we human beings have shown we cannot do. Jesus fulfilled every one of the Ten Commandments every day of His earthly life to perfection; not because He needed to earn His own victory over sin and death, but because He needed to earn our victory over sin and death!
 - It is by His sacrifice as the spotless Lamb of God on the cross that Jesus repaired the broken heart of God and broke instead the chains of sin, death, and the power of the devil – all of which seek every day to grieve the Father’s heart.

→ But with Jesus you and I live now in a “new” relationship with God our Father – one of freedom from sin; of blessing in our earthly lives; and of protection in the boundless and eternal grace of God.

⊗ This “law” that is imprinted in our hearts friends, might be understood properly as what Martin Luther called the Third Use of the Law; where you and I no longer view God’s Law as a list of oppressive rules that “take all of the fun out of life”, but instead where each of us, as believers, actually finds great joy in God’s Law and sincerely desires to live each day guided and directed in all of our thoughts and deeds by the love of God that is poured out upon us in Jesus Christ.

→ You see, now under the new covenant, because God has loved us so, our hearts that were once broken have been remade and we see in Jesus that we can, and we do love again!

→ Now because of Jesus and His cross and forgiveness, His love motivates us to live in faith, and to act according to the new “law” that He has written upon our hearts. Now we want nothing to do with any other false or self-made gods – we love God that much. Now we are quick to put aside our own desires in order to show love to those around us – especially those who need to hear about the radical love and heart of Christ.

Conclusion

⊗ Yes, as it must always be, everything “new” and good about God’s covenant written in our hearts is all about Jesus and His love.

→ His is the promise of forgiveness and new life; the assurance of broken hearts now remade and restored because Christ allowed His body to be broken and sacrificed upon the cross.

→ His saving work has returned us from the exile of sin into the loving heart of our God so that now we live here and forever with the message of His unending love written upon our hearts. Amen.