

The Prophet Jeremiah

Sunday, March 21, 2021

"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."

Jeremiah 31:33

Perhaps the biggest trope of the Hebrew Scriptures is that the story is always the same:

People make a covenant with God.

People break the covenant.

God makes a new covenant.

Rinse and repeat.

Have you heard this joke made before? Joke or not, there is an invaluable nugget of truth hidden within it that merits reminding: God continues (and will continue) to make new covenants with us — every time we break them. Every time.

Make no mistake, we will break the covenant: with God, with a spouse or family member, with a friend, with a coworker, doctor or teammate, and even with our children. It may be just a small little break. It may be a very large one. It is our human condition: we are imperfect, and we will sin, and we will choose other-than-God in our lives. Even still, God will always love us. God will send Jeremiah as in the Hebrew Scriptures or find some other way to remind us that there is always room for a new covenant, to start fresh.

The vision of Jeremiah is one of hope, blessing and the faithfulness of God even in the face of despair and destruction. Jeremiah reminds us that God's love for us is utterly relentless. God's fidelity is so deep and desirous, it is written on our very hearts. Jesus tells us that at the end He will draw everyone to him. While we will break, we will fall, we will struggle, still, God will want us back. God will want to draw us close, to hold us in our human frailty and imperfection. Our humanity, our imperfection and our sins do not keep us from being worthy of love. We are always wanted.

That kind of love can be hard for us as human beings. We suffer and are hurt often by broken promises with the very people we care for most. Indeed, as broken people who exist with other broken people, sometimes boundaries need to be set. We have limits. People suffer at the hands of others. We are rude, unkind and at times, knowingly or not, instruments of evil. Nevertheless, the kind of love that renews and always brings new life, while sometimes unimaginable, persists. With forgiveness, compassion and empathy, we build resilience, even if the path toward it is rocky, difficult or awkward terrain.

Surely, we will break the covenant, but the beauty of our story as God's people is that there are also always places where we can begin to bind it back together. Where we can edge out our own blindness, our expectations of one another, and offer the compassion and forgiveness that God always, always offers us. If we stay open to what God asks of us, to what God wants us to see, we can begin again; we can find a new start, to try once more to love each other a little better than before.

Brief daily reflections for the remainder of the week:

Monday, March 22, 2021

Without question, we have broken covenants: with a spouse, a coworker, a child. Reflect for a moment on the feeling of disappointment, what was it like for you to respond to the break?

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Jeremiah's vision is one of the unfailing love and faithfulness of God in the face of the people's faithlessness. While this kind of love and hope can be trying, especially in difficult times, how can you work to make Jeremiah's vision your own?

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Consider a time in your life when you had to set a limit for yourself or a relationship, thereby breaking a covenant you had made. Maybe you had to say "no" to a project at work or decline a gathering with friends. What was it like to say, "no"? How did the choice contribute to your well-being?



Reflection for the Fifth Week of Lent

Thursday, March 25, 2021

Consider a time when a limit was placed on you, when someone broke a covenant they had made. What was it like? How did you demonstrate resiliency in the face of the boundary?

Friday, March 26, 2021

The beauty of our story as God's people is that, even when the covenant is broken, there is room to build again. We apologize to a co-worker for dropping the ball, we are gifted a peace offering by a spouse or loved one. Can you think of a time in your own life where you worked for reconciliation?

Saturday, March 27, 2021

How can this season of lent be an opportunity to try once more to love each other better than before? In what ways can you tangibly demonstrate the relentlessness of God's love to those around you?