



Dis-membered and Re-membered – TouchPoint for March 17, 2021

Jeremiah 31:31-34 NRSV A New Covenant

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD.

³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: 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. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD;

for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”

Grace and peace from the mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

“And I will remember their sin no more.”

I talk a lot about the word remember. I use it in connection to Holy Communion when Jesus says to “Do this to re-member me.” And I use it to mean, not the opposite of ‘forget’, but as the opposite of ‘dis-member’. To ‘re-member’ is to ‘member’, connect, join. We partake of this meal to re-connect, re-join, re-member ourselves to the one who is all and in all.

So, when God is speaking to Jeremiah in this passage and says, “I will remember their sins no more.” It is more than just forgetting. It is not associating with, connecting to, joining with. It is a dis-membering. God simply won’t connect our sins to us. We are separated from them. Not connected to them.

Which is pretty powerful when you think about it. Because there are people in my life who the only thing I connect them with is the wrongs they have done to me. The sins they have committed against me. If you mention their names, I will immediately get a knot in my stomach and grind my teeth. They are synonymous with their sin.

And it isn’t just others I connect with sin. I continually beat myself up as well. I remember the first few years after my divorce, that was the primary way I saw myself. As a divorcee. I couldn’t get away from it. And if someone said I was a wonderful human being, I would think to myself, “If I was such a wonderful human being, I wouldn’t have gotten a divorce.

Those old tapes seem to not only haunt my life but others as well. When I have done counseling with people, I can’t tell you the numbers of times I have heard them say, “I guess I’m just not a very good person.”

It seems we can’t get away from identifying ourselves with our inadequacies, failures, brokenness.

And yet here is God, saying to Jeremiah,

“I will forgive their iniquities and remember their sin no more.” There is no connection in God’s eyes to your sin. They are not a part of you. They are not membered to you. And God will not “re-member’ them to you. But dis-member them from you.

Now God is not just a God of dis-membering, but re-membering. And here is what God will remember to you. Reconnect to you.

God will write God's law within you. God will write Godself on your heart.
We won't even need to teach one another, because we will know from the inside out.

“Behold the days are coming when I will make a new covenant...This is the covenant I will make:

I will put my law in their minds...

I will write it on their hearts.

I will be their God...”

Now my first thought, when I read these words is that... God it seems, is a ball-hog. When it comes to our salvation, our healing and wholeness, God doesn't play well with others. God doesn't share. If being saved were a ball game...God would be a ball-hog.

Did you ever play a sport that involved a ball? Did you ever play with someone who hogged the ball the whole time? Did you like it? Neither did I.

Yet when it comes to our salvation, our healing, our wholeness...God is a ball hog. Our reading for today makes it clear. God keeps saying, “I will, I will, I will”. The only time we are mentioned as doing anything, we break the covenant.

So, what do we do with a God who takes things into his own hands?

What do we do with a God who doesn't wait for us to act? What do we do with a God who initiates and completes our salvation without any help from us?

Before we can begin to talk about what great 'good news' this passage is...these verses are...I think we need to acknowledge they are a threat to us. Because you see, they don't allow us a say. God has simply decided in Jesus to take our salvation into his hands and secure it. God will not wait for us to be ready, to be open, to be inclined. God has simply decided to take control.

Now losing control is not something I like to do. Giving it up is even worse. Heck, I won't even give up the remote control for my TV. Why would I give up control of my salvation?

So, what do we do with a God who takes things into his own hands? What do we do with a God who doesn't wait for us to act? What do we do with a God who initiates and completes our salvation without any help from us?

Perhaps a better question is...what DID we do with a God who controlled our salvation.

Well, if we go back to Genesis, we see in Adam and Eve that we ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Why? Well...we wanted to be god-like. We wanted to have the final say over good and evil, right and wrong. We wanted to be god of our lives and world.

God then initiated a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, and later with Moses. Guess what we did with those covenants? We broke them.

When that didn't work to well, God decided to step in in Jesus, to establish a new covenant. He started

healing people who didn't ask to be healed. He started forgiving people who didn't even ask to be forgiven. And what did we do? Well, we hung him on a cross and said, "You can't do that. You are not the kind of God we want." And he simply comes back 3 days later, and says, "Nice try. I'll take it from here."

This is the God Jeremiah is speaking of...a relentless God. A God who will not and cannot be stopped. A God who will never stop working to write God's law on my heart, on your heart, instead of tablets of stone. A God who will never cease being our God and never cease calling us God's people and never cease making us anew in God's image and likeness, to live according to God's will.

God is simply going to be a ball-hog when it comes to our healing and wholeness. And our disobedience won't stop God. Our brokenness won't stop God. Our sin won't stop God.

God it seems... will not remember our sins anymore... will not hold them against us... nor will they stop God from working on us...in us...and through us.

I will forgive their iniquity...

I will remember their sins no more

As I mentioned earlier, that seems to be the only thing I remember about some people and even worse, myself. But here is God. Not re-remembering, not re-connecting, not re-joining our sins to us. But dis-membering them from us.

I find that to be quite a relief, because somewhere in my childhood, either in grade school or Young Life, I was told that on judgment day, at the end of time, the whole world would gather together. All the billions and billions of people who ever lived would be gathered together in front of God. And there on a screen, my whole life would be shown in front of everyone. Not only everything I ever did, but everything I ever thought. It all would be reconnected back to me. Re-remembered to me. Now that thought was scary enough to almost make me pee in my pants, but then I realized that would show up on a screen in front of billions of people if I did, so I held it in. Everything would be held against me. Everything would be remembered.

But here is Jeremiah speaking words from God. "*I will forgive their iniquity, and I will re-remember their sins no more.*"

Wow. What a relief. Even if this whole screen thing is true. My video is going to be pretty short. And all those who know me well, they will say to God, "Hey, you left out a bunch of stuff, a whole lot of stuff."

And God will simply reply, "Say what...I don't remember."

A dis-membering of our sin. A re-remembering to God.

This is the truth that will set us free.

God does not re-remember our sins to us ...

so why do we?

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

Create in Me

(The Concordia Choir)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not the holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

See Him

(Keith Duke)

See him: 1) silent and lifeless. 2) alone and forlorn 3) broken and helpless...Crowned with a garland of thorns 4) as son and as brother 5) related to all 6) through the grief of a mother...hurting the most of all 7) as healer and teacher 8) as helper and friend 9) as prophet and preacher...

Ignore Him??? I doubt if you can.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Our Father 3, Choirs of Annunciation Byzantine Church)

Benediction

Gaelic Blessing/Deep Peace

(John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers)

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you.

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you.

Deep peace of the gentle night to you. Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.

Deep peace of Christ, of Christ the light of the world to you.

Deep peace of Christ to you.

