

Written on Our Hearts

"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. 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."

These are words from Jeremiah that we will hear on Sunday. I don't think I can think of a much more hopeful phrase than this one. In the multitude of the ways our lives, our loves and our hopes might pass away, God always stands ready to make all things new; to forget forever the way we wound, betray, or ignore God's hope for us!

God's word is written on our hearts. The divine essence is the substance of our creation. If this is true, we might rightly ask, why do we still have the capacity to wound one another so badly?

The simple truth is that God's will and hope for us never, ever trumps the gift of free will that God has given us. This is very, very important for the human family to grasp and trust. God's word is written in the innermost chambers of our hearts, but free will is just that, our ability to say NO to God anytime, anywhere, any place or circumstance.

To wed our will with God's and to soften our hearts of stone, means we must surrender our need to self-protect and to live out of fear and instead open ourselves to heartbreaking truth that life is short and someday we all must die—just like the grain of wheat that falls into the earth.

What might we be able to do if we lived that truth each and every day of our lives? Would we risk love a bit more if we trusted that God's word of hope, joy, and mercy. The truth is, and we forget this all the time, we are never promised length of life, but we *are* promised that the *way in which we live* can give us eternal life now.

As I said on Sunday, eternal life now means we live our lives in such a way that we love, laugh, forgive, accept forgiveness, open ourselves up to show great courage in the face of adversity and that we get up every time we get knocked down by defeat or loss.

Each time we fall God gives us the ability to rise up with hope and reject the bitterness that hurt can bring. We may instead, resolve to love more than before, forgive more than before, and not let lesser angels guide our future. We may be so bold as to believe that God offers us even greater potential to love and live without fear each and every day.

When we offer ourselves to this life held in knowledge that God's word is written on our hearts, meaning our very will, and that we, like Jesus, can be as God to our world--- I believe that then our ability to feel God's presence and see God's astounding beauty everywhere increases beyond measure, even amid the pain and suffering that life can deal everyday.

We keep waiting on the world to change, forgetting that change begins with each and every one of us. From the way we are with one another in community all the way up to how we respond to the global community---waiting for others to change instead of looking at our own hearts and minds is a prescription for continued misery.

God's word is written on our hearts. I think that to become fully human, as God created us to be, means simply being aware of this unassailable truth and then allowing this truth to guide our lives.

Like dominoes falling in succession once one is tipped, even our smallest moments of courage, hope, and grace in the face of suffering and pain can cascade into our world like a ripple effect.

Do we *have* the courage to open ourselves to God's hope and not protect ourselves from it—will we allow ourselves to be changed and transformed from within?

Will we allow ourselves to be renewed and made free, not apart from the suffering that surrounds and fills us, but in the midst of it? Jesus has shown us, in the flesh, what living this life looks like. Dare we follow him to his death in order to truly live?

Happy Lent, Stephanie+