



*Written On the Heart*

*Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 12:20-33*

Sunday, March 18th, 2018 • Fifth Sunday in Lent

First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois

Rev. Dr. Forrest L. Krummel, Jr.

Text: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. (*Jeremiah 31:33*)

I wonder what God meant when God told Jeremiah that the law would be “written on their hearts”?

When I was a boy my father used to tell me that you cannot legislate morality. You can make laws about discrimination but the laws do not remove prejudice from the human heart. You can make laws about killing, but you will still find murder. You can set speed limits, but people still drive faster than the posted speed.

The old covenant, the Sinai Covenant was written in stone tablets, but the people could not abide by them. That is how Judah and Israel found themselves in exile in foreign lands. We fallen creatures seem to be unable to abide by external laws and rules. Behavior is only changed not externally, but internally; not by the rule of law but a change of heart.

In Jeremiah we read that God was going to imprint, literally carve or tattoo, the law upon the human heart so that it would be a part of who we are. We could act without thinking but out of a sense of habit.

This covenant was to be given not at the time of Jeremiah but in later generations. We, who take Jesus seriously, believe that He is the new covenant that Jeremiah pointed to. Whereas the first covenant called a people, Jesus called individuals to be a new people, a “peculiar” people. A people what knows what it means to be “saved” or “set apart” to “serve.

In John’s gospel Jesus told his disciples that unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains but a single grain. But if it “loses itself”, it’s “old self” and “dies” it will bear much fruit. He went on to say that “whoever serves Him must also follow Him and do the work that He does. (*John 24-25*)

Each week during this season of Lent I have challenged worshipers with a “homework” assignment. This week, if you wish to grown deeper spiritual roots, I encourage you to begin by reflectively reading the New Testament Letter of James, which I believe is “Practically Christianity 101”. an intro level course. And then read the Beatitudes in Matthew’s gospel. As you read them, ask yourself what God is calling you to do in that letter or that blessing. Pray for the courage and strength to do that which God calls you to do, to live out your insight. Begin your day doing this. And at the end of the day, when you lay down to go to sleep, reflect upon the events of the day and look for those times when God touched you.

To God be the glory. Amen.