

## Sermon: 2021/03/21 (Last Sunday in Lent, Year B) - *Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-13; Hebrews 5:5-10;* *John 12:20-33\_BTR*

[Invite children to the front]

### Kids' Talk: Law 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."

Those are God's words - a *promise* to humanity, spoken by His messenger, the prophet "Jeremiah."

(And it is one of my favourite verses in the Bible.)

But what did he mean?!

After all, God couldn't have been speaking *literally*:  
just imagine -

What would it look like to *literally* 'write' on a person's heart?

Firstly, you'd have to cut them open!

And then what kind of pen would you have to use?

To 'write' on a heart.

A Sharpie?

But with a very, very small nib - after all, God's 'law' isn't just the "Ten Commandments;" there's *six hundred and thirteen* rules altogether in the Old Testament!

So you'd have to use teensy, *tiny* lettering to fit everything in.

And maybe a magnifying glass!

But all that sounds gruesome and silly.

No, what God meant was that He would find a way to inspire *in* us a *love* for His design; for *holiness* - and He did that through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.

God, maker of everything, allowed Himself to be hung on a tree for you and for me.  
Wow.

Let's pray:

Father God, ... In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

### Capturing Hearts

Okay - I've a quick quiz for you:

It's very easy:

one word answers.

Please don't respond out-loud - just silently inside of your own head.

Understand?

There's not a "right" or a "wrong."

It's subjective - I'm asking about *you*.

Here we go:

Question no. 1 - Is church boring? Yes or no?

(And by "church," here I mean, specifically, Sunday mornings; routine worship.)

Question no. 2 - Is discipleship boring? Yes or no?

Last one: question no 3. - Is *Christ* boring? Yes or no?

You know, I wouldn't be surprised if many of us said "yes" to ourselves, privately, just now... to at least the first question, that is.

Especially if you're young.

And *especially* if you're not exploiting the opportunity to really explore the very exciting and exotic backstories of the Bible in "Sunday School."

But perhaps some of us replied "yes" to the second question too, because, well, we're not really even trying, and our lives look pretty much like everyone else's - too much "TV;"

too much easy-living;

too social media and "rat-race,"

*and not enough* "picking up crosses;" *not enough* taking *real* risks in faithfulness to the "Great Commission."

Just the same beige, bourgeois, self-centered existence of typical "mainliners" - genuinely comfortable being not just "in" but also "of" the world

- of the world that, in *John's* gospel just now, we heard is "ruled" by the Devil, who 'will [eventually] be driven out.'

What about the last question, though?

Jesus.

Is *He* boring?

Uninteresting?

Un...engaging?

And if He seems so - to you; to the wider public - is it because you or they just don't *really* know Him?

Haven't ever truly given Him the attention and curiosity He deserves.

As *the* Son of God -

'begotten, not made.'

'[A] high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.' (*Huh?!*)

Because notice how, in the "text," when He was on the earth, people were either

repelled by Him, *hated* Him; or powerfully drawn to Him - *fascinated* by what He had to say and by what He was able to do.

There was no "middle ground."

No..."meh." [Shrug.]

The reaction was one or the other.

And, usually, more often than not, the latter:

which is why, again and again, we hear of "*crowds*."

Thousands and thousands of men and women coming from miles around, on foot, in hot sunshine, across the open countryside to "catch" a glimpse.

To which, of course, you might reply: well, that was in Galilee.

There was nothing going on "up there:"

some vineyards, a bit of fishing to do on the Lake.

A field of wheat to tend.

And I'd take your point if - *if* - what we saw in another context was much different; *if* Jesus passed unnoticed in more cosmopolitan, industrious, urban areas.

And yet what we *actually* see is that Jesus remained as magnetic and enthralling in such places as well - this is one of the observations I'd make about today's passage:

*Nowhere* in Palestine was as busy and populated and claustrophobic and distracting as Jerusalem.

Always *full* of pilgrims;

always *full* of tourists.

The streets churning and bursting with priests and Pharisees.

Politicians and prostitutes and prophets.

Roman soldiers and dignitaries.

Terrorists and false-messiahs.

Soothsayers and wizards and hawksters.

Which is probably why we see that there 'were some Greeks.'

Like an American in Tokyo or Beijing, they probably came because of how *alien* Jerusalem was to what *they* thought was normal.

Yes, there were a few, small Greek colonies - city-states - on the (Mediterranean) coast.

But what would have brought Greek visitors *inland*?

- to the dusty, grey hills of Judea?

*Jerusalem*.

Jerusalem was intoxicating *and bizarre* to the Greek; to the Westerner, that is.

(It was then and it is now.)

There was *sooo(!)* much to experience, *sooo(!)* much weird, cultic religious stuff happening.

*And yet still*, Jesus stood out;

"caught" their curiosity.

And we need to trust that He can still do the same today.

We need to trust that there's a uniqueness - a *charisma* - that nobody else has, whether Muhammad, Buddha or Dwayne "the Rock" Johnson.

That Jesus possesses a mysterious quality that can't be found anywhere else - There's His divinity, of course - so obvious in hindsight, but confusing and unclear to many at the time.

No, what they saw in Him - though they couldn't tell where it came from - was His *love* that put everyone else *first*.

He wasn't the center of attention as an end in itself; *He* wasn't looking to be 'glorified', but to *glorify*.

To suffer *any* indignity, *any* agony for the "greater good" - for a greater *God*, than most worship: themselves.

And the Church has been inspired to emulate this ambitious calling - always imperfectly, but also with remarkable success on occasion.

So, are you willing to try "glorifying" - not yourself - but Him?