



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 21, 2021

New and Improved

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31:31 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.

31:32 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.

31:33 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.

31:34 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.

After many hours in recovery, when he came to, he found his wife of thirty-five years and his daughter waiting in that small hospital room, masked and in protective gear, to greet him. In almost a whisper he declared to them, "I'm new and improved!" The organ transplant surgery had been a success and he had a new organ and a new outlook on life.

We often search and long for the new, the latest, the improved. Admittedly, sometimes we are motivated by the novelty and convenience; but, sometimes, the new and improved are needed because what is and what was is now broken.

Our God is a God of Love. Our God is a God of Relationship. Our God is a God of Freedom. Jeremiah tells us so. God chose the Israelites. God chose to love them limitlessly. God chose to be in covenant relationship even at the risk of being betrayed and disappointed by them time and time again. God chose to lead them to their freedom out of bondage and to give them free will. And in return, they chose idols, placed limits on their love for God, broke their covenant, and chose bondage. Yet God remained loving, in relationship, and choosing free will over a forced and compulsory love. A new covenant was imagined, an improved way of knowing, relating, and loving was established—new hearts lovingly inscribed by God.

Lent presents us with the opportunity to examine our covenant relationship with this same God who chooses love, relationship, and free will—the same God who chooses us over and over again no matter what. What does your heart look like? How is it marked by God’s word, will, and way?

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, how are you remaining faithful to your part of the covenant with God?

PRAY:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. AMEN

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, are there covenant relationships that are broken that you are being called to mend or restore? For the next seven days, pray and ask God to show you the next faithful steps which you need to take toward this restoration. In this Lenten Season, do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and prayerfully considering getting the vaccine when it is available— See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. 2021 Liberation and Unity Lenten Devotional: <https://www.amazon.com/LIBERATION-UNITY-Lenten-Devotional-Meditation-ebook/dp/B08TGHQ3TX/ref=sr/1/1?crd=2PZK8J6YGY2LB&dchild=1&keywords=2021+lenten+devotional+liberation+and+unity&qid=1612922064&srefix=2021+liberation+and+unity,aps,159&sr=8-1>

Song:

Lord, I Want to Be a Christian
AMEC Hymnal, #282

1. Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian In-a my heart.
In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,) In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,)
Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian In-a my heart.
2. Lord, I want to be more lov-ing In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be more lov-ing In-a my heart.
In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,) In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,)
Lord, I want to be more lov-ing In-a my heart.
3. Lord, I want to be more ho-ly In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be more ho-ly In-a my heart.
In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,) In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,)
Lord, I want to be more ho-ly In-a my heart.
4. I don't want to be like Ju-das In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
I don't want to be like Ju-das In-a my heart.

In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,) In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,)
I don't want to be like Ju-das In-a my heart.

5. Lord, I want to be like Je-sus In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be like Je-sus In-a my heart.
In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,) In-a my heart, (In-a my heart,)
Lord, I want to be like Je-sus In-a my heart.

Alternative Selection: Create in Me A Clean Heart, Donnie McClurkin (Based on Psalm 51):
<https://youtu.be/bacXQPujfKI>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.