

Sunday March 21, 2021

Scripture Lesson: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Sermon Series: "Heart to Heart": Part 1

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are concluding our Heart to Heart sermon series; a series designed to get to the heart of what the scriptures are trying to relay to the people then and now.

So my preaching goal for Part 1 of this message is to have a heart to heart with you individually and share with you a little bit about what is going on with me personally; with the hope that some of my sharing may resonate with some of you;

For those who get the First Connection newsletter, last month, I shared that this was a season for me to "let people in"

Let people into my heart;

Let people into my thoughts;

Let people in; in spite of my insecurities or fears;

I guess being almost 42 in May, older age comes with a sense of freedom;

For I am at the point in my life where I have realized that most things that we worry about, do not come to fruition and even if some of our worries do become reality; things have a sort of way of working itself out; This is perhaps the essence of what the scripture means when it says *All things work together for the good of those who love the Lord and are called according to God's purpose*; Romans 8:28

So here is my stab in the dark of letting you in;

So for me this last installment of this message series is the most important for us to consider;

Because as I looked over this scriptural lesson for part 1 of this message in this service and looked at our gospel for the second service;

I am seeing some questions surface that may require most of us; some time to think about and reflect upon beyond this message;

Questions that perhaps may require many of us a lifetime to think about;

Questions that invite us to consider what our belief system is as it pertains to the Triune God;

What do we believe about God the Creator?

What do we believe about Jesus Christ?

What do we believe about the Holy Spirit?

And I know these are heavy questions to jump into; especially since I have been gone for two Sundays; after vacationing with my family in Florida;

A vacation that was very enjoyable;

For it was great to be at the beach almost every day;

Looking out at the vastness of the ocean;

I was grateful to see the seagulls;

I was grateful to feel the waves of the ocean hit against my body;

And yes I squealed like a little girl every time the waves did so;

For I was certain that one good wave would knock me over; which it never did;

I was most grateful to be there with my family; my husband and four children;

And how the drive took 26 hours going there and 21 hours returning back; **that I will never understand....**

But getting back to the questions I raised earlier pertaining to what we believe about God; believe it or not, the same questions that I raised, I thought a lot about on our trip;

Because truthfully, this was not a vacation that I took; simply to get a respite from the day to day life of ministry and other obligations;

I took this vacation to take some time to explore my own faith;

Because no matter how much I tried to forget;

I was still reeling from the shock of losing my mentor Rev. Junius Dotson to pancreatic cancer;

I can't tell you how many times I have played some of his teaching and preaching videos; simply because it is very hard for me to believe that he is gone.

During my vacation, I was also in a place of tremendous concern as well for myself and my family, who doesn't appear even being close to getting a Covid vaccination;

For although we have been safe so far; whether I want to acknowledge it or not; **Covid and all of its realities** is still heavily on my mind;

I am constantly discerning how we as a family, might re-enter and re-engage into the world with some sort of normalcy; at the same time worrying if we are doing too much, too soon.

From a leadership perspective; I was in a decent place emotionally leaving for vacation; but if I am honest; my efficacy and ability to lead in times such as this; still weighs heavily on mind; especially after learning that so many of my colleagues are taking early retirements and temporary leaves; because the weight of it all is beginning to take its toll;

So this is a long way of my saying that all of these things and more; on both a personal level; along with my overall global awareness of the systemic issues and problems in our world; have brought me to this place of revisiting what I believe about God?

For over these past few weeks of scriptures that I have preached on; **the theme of covenant** has been mentioned a lot;

So much so that now, I feel led to go deeper into exploring why;

For now we are seeing in our passage of Jeremiah, **the theme of covenant** being mentioned again;

This time, we are presented with the Lord informing the people of Israel, through the prophet Jeremiah; that God is making **a new covenant** with the people.

And so why I am so concerned with this theme of covenant that keeps coming up, is because in my mind, **if you and I can get to the heart of the covenant;** then perhaps then, we can also get to the heart of who the Triune God truly is.

For that is essentially the promise that this New Covenant is bringing to the people according to our scripture this morning (vs 34);

Is to help the people to really learn what it means to **“Know the Lord.”**

God is expressing a desire for **having a deeper connection with humanity**, where when it is all said and done, we will all have moved from seeing God as something that is unattainable or unreachable; into seeing God as our Father or Mother; whichever personifier you are more comfortable with using.

God is expressing a desire **for a deeper connection** where before, leaders such as Moses had only the privilege of experiencing God on the top of Mount Sinai; while the people waited at the foothills;

And now, God is essentially saying to the people then and now, I am inviting you all to the top of Sinai to experience Me.

So you see church, as I submerge in this story fully now; the Lord has been trying to convey something to humanity for a while now in my mind; as I attempt to unpack the particulars of this covenant even further;

For in this passage of scripture today in Jeremiah; there is a clear biblical distinction being made between the Old Covenant of Sinai and the New Covenant of Calvary.¹

The Old Covenant was the one the Lord made to the Fathers of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;

A covenant that led the Israelite people out of the land of Egypt.

The New Covenant is the fulfillment in the work of Jesus Christ in individual persons.²

¹Hall, B. H. (1969). [The Book of Jeremiah](#). In *Isaiah-Malachi* (Vol. 3, p. 279). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

² Hall, B. H. (1969). [The Book of Jeremiah](#). In *Isaiah-Malachi* (Vol. 3, p. 279). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

But the fact that our text today is mentioning an old covenant and a new covenant, lets me know as the reader of this text, **that somewhere, somehow** God is at work in a mighty way;

So much so that I believe that there is **a heart to heart** to be shared with the people of then and now.

For it is not that God had a change of heart and did not like what the Old Covenant represented anymore;

For **in the Old Covenant**, God promised to lead the people out of Egypt;

In the Old covenant, God in God's ways promised to provide for the people;

In the Old Covenant, God always cared and loved the people....

So friends, there was nothing wrong with the Old Covenant per se;

But as in any healthy relationship with the ones we love, when you and I try to communicate with one another and express our thoughts and ideas; when the

recipient of our love is not connecting in the way that we hoped for; we try another approach.

We dig in and work a little harder in sharing our thoughts, in a way where that other person can better understand where we are coming from;

In fact, this is what I have learned is the secret to having any good relationship, whether it is with your partner, friend, children or coworker;

For good and healthy relationships do not automatically become this way on its own.

We have to nurture the relationships around us;

We have to be adaptive sometimes in our approaches with one another;

We have to be intentional in using every communicative strategy and tool in our emotional quotient toolbox, to sometimes convey what we need to convey to the people around us;

So this is what I see happening between this notion of God moving the people from this Old Covenant toward this New Covenant.

For as the people evolved;
The generations and nations evolved;
The Old Covenant in where God brought the original
Israelites through the wilderness, became a distant but
somewhat relative memory for the generation of
Jeremiah's day.

But let's just say the Covenant needed some
enhancements....

To clarify this point;

Just like stories that our former generations would tell
to the newer generations of today; how for instance my
dad, would tell me how he had to walk through rain,
sleet and snow to get to school every morning; to
highlight how I had it so much easier in my day;
Well let's say, that just as it was time for my dad to
come up with some new material, to encourage my
motivation to stop complaining and get my tush to
school;

I would imagine that the wise God that we are striving
to know, realized the need to do the same thing;

God in my eyes, realized that it was time to take a different approach with the people, if God hoped for humanity to truly **let God in**;

You see what I am naming to you this morning, is that I would imagine that God detected that a disconnect occurred in this desired covenant with humanity; just as when my dad was alive; when he would share his inflated stories with me of how hard he had it growing up to try to motivate me; My dad, bless his sweet resting heart whose physical birth just passed on March 8th; needed some new parenting material!

This concept that I am teaching of adaptability actually applies in general when you are dealing with people.

This is why as a side note, churches have to be adaptive and ever evolving;

Because **although our history** is something that we can never dismiss;

Although our history is something I will always cherish and ensure remains as our foundation as a church community;

The task for the church today, is to be able to adapt and evolve as the people adapts and evolves;

For **we are serving communities** where newer generations never heard for instance, the sound of a dial tone....

We are serving communities where they do not know what it means when the ole school video stores said, "Be kind, Rewind."

We are serving communities where people do not know what it means to "roll the window down."

This is the world we are in now;

Where emojis have replaced words and feelings;

Where texting has its own language and identity;

We are serving a world where although some of the cultural norms are still there; I see glimpses of it.....

However as a people, the evolution of thought has soared;

People are finding new ways to experience church and spirituality from home and other places;

And this is a reality that I as your spiritual leader am not going to fight against;

For I am encouraged in seeing God's activity in this passage today that affirms that God would agree with my pastoral approach;

That when the **old covenant** loses some of its luster or is not connecting with people the way it has before;

When **the old covenant** is something that no longer really resonates with the people;

Then it is time to take a slightly different approach;

And for those of tradition who may be panicked by my suggesting this;

Trust and believe that this does not mean that the old is discarded;

No on the contrary, the old is transformed;

But the essence of the tradition still remains....

You see looking at this passage even closer; **it is evident to me** through the words of our prophet

Jeremiah; God's intent to be in a relationship and covenant with humanity has never changed;

It is clear that God has not given up on becoming an intricate part of humanity's lives.

But somehow, when it comes to humanity's response towards God; something has gone amiss.

It's almost as if most of humanity were to update their relationship status on social media as it pertains to God, the status would be **its complicated**.

So it is our job as a church, to make spaces where the present generations and future generations sees that this relationship status as it pertains to God, does not have to be complicating.

Which is going to be a difficult task but not an impossible task;

For God is Fluid;

God's Word is active and alive;

God and God's Word has no problem handling whatever nuance, crisis or situation that humanity can ever be present with;

It is our job as I see it as leaders and the church community as a whole to keep God and God's Word fluid;

It is our job to teach and demonstrate that God's love can still transform and heal any spiritual, emotional, mental or physical wound or burden that you or I may have;

It is our job to make sure that God's covenant to God's people remains alive and not stagnate.

So what makes the task that I am naming complicating is when we make it complicating;

It is when you and I refuse to adapt;

It is when you and I choose to be stifled;

It is when you and I choose to be exclusive;

That is what shuts God's covenant out from God's people.

So our role is to make spaces where people are safe and can know that this new covenant does not apply to just us, but it applies to everyone.

This is the task of the reconciling ministry;

It is a work of repair;

It is a work of healing;

It is a work of restoration;

It is the work of the resurrection;

Now shifting gears a bit, even with all this said; there are times as I share my heart with you, that I too, struggle with my covenantal relationship with God.

For if I am honest, **it has been difficult** for me to discern God's role and activity in the midst of all that I have named in my own personal life, concerns and struggles at times;

It has been difficult for me to feel good about this covenantal relationship with God when for instance learning about the spa shootings recently in Atlanta; 8 individuals of Asian/Korean descent (mainly women) being tragically killed; which in my book was a racially targeted and motivated crime of hate and misogyny.

So again not naming God as the culprit for any of these instances;

However when instances like this and more keeps happening; it puts a strain on my covenantal relationship with God, mainly because I am trying to discern God's role and activity in the midst of it all.

Is God the silent observer;

Is God the empathetic witness;

Is God the patient mediator;

What do I believe about the Triune God?

Getting back to the text one final time and looking at the old covenant a little more; when God led the people out of Egypt and through the wilderness;

For us in 2021, reading the stories of the people back then, it is more obvious to where God was in the midst of their tragedy and oppression.

For **we had the benefit** of biblical translators naming that God was in the pillars of the sky, leading the people day and night;

We had the benefit of stories that named that God gave the people manna that never ran out;

We had the benefit of reading documenting miracles of God parting the Red seas to help deliver God's people.

But I wonder, when the people of that day were actually living in those times, was God's presence as apparent to them?

Or were they just like us; trying to survive day by day?

For typically **when you or I are in survival mode**, most of us don't have the luxury to think about some of these theological questions I am raising.

When you and I are in survival mode from circumstances like food insecurity, poverty , abuse of all forms and more; it can be difficult to get out of crisis mode.

So these are some of the stumbling blocks that I would imagine keeps humanity in this complicated relationship status as it pertains to God.

For in a sense, God in both the old and new covenant is asking humanity **to let God in;**

In the Old Covenant, God as Creator communicated through signs, wonders and prophets; beckoning humanity to **Let God in;**

In the new covenant by way of God as Jesus; both fully human and fully divine; Jesus beckoned humanity again to let God in;

Through the repetition of the words in our passage of scripture today; words that say **I will make ... I will put ... I will be ... I will forgive; church** God takes the initiative;

God asks humanity to respond.

The New covenant asks us to respond to this idea of being open to a new heart.

The New Covenant invites us into a new relationship where God says **I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

The New Covenant incorporates the personal relationship, which was also the basis for the Old Covenant; so you see the tradition is still there;

However, the New Covenant was deemed by God a necessary approach and adaptation to convey to the people of Jeremiah's day that essentially said to the people, "I want to have a deeper relationship with you;" I want you to know me...really know me.... I want you to let me in;

And so the million dollar question to some who still may be on the fence of how this covenant is even relevant with tragedies such as the Atlanta shootings, pandemic and other personal and global issues still persisting?

For if this covenant relationship with God does not end food insecurity, tragic shootings and more, then what is the point?

My response to questions such as these without the risk of sounding too obtuse is that the answer is something that as a church community is ever evolving and revealing itself to us;

For **The New Covenant** deals not with the external day to day issues that you or I may encounter but with the source of life itself.

The new covenant provides the opportunity for The springs of life to be renewed by the regenerating grace of God.

So to put it in simpler terms, a relationship with God in this new covenant does not promise that you and I will not encounter metaphorical storms in our lives, but having a relationship with God will help us through the storm.

The New covenant does not put an end to food insecurity, but it empowers us to be a part of the solution.

The New Covenant does not put an end to racism, oppression or any other isms that we are faced with as a society per se; but it does remind us that we all belong at the top of that metaphorical mountain with God like Moses;

The **New Covenant** leads us to this place of resurrection in the here and the now if we subscribe to it;

The New Covenant invites us into a collective family where we all can be assured that we are part of God's family;

Finally **the New Covenant** clarifies and reiterates that we are all of equal, sacred and intrinsic worth;

The **Old Covenant** in many ways implied the same thing, but again, it was time for God to take another approach;

For I believe the signs and wonders that God displayed; although were powerful; there was still a disconnect for humanity;

And so the New Covenant that is embedded in the scripture of John 3:16 had to come into fruition;

For God so loved the World that God gave us Jesus; both fully human, and fully divine to come down to Earth to re-establish the connection between humanity and God's Self;

To have a personal heart to heart with humanity to say
to us, I am here;
Let me in.

Sunday March 21, 2021
First Lesson: Psalm 51: 1-12
Gospel Lesson: John 12: 20-33
Sermon Series: "Heart to Heart"
Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are concluding our Heart to Heart sermon series; a series designed to get to the heart of what the scriptures are trying to relay to the people then and now.

In this message I am picking up where I left off in Part one of the sermon this morning that I encourage you all to listen to when you have time;

For to reiterate, these sermon series tend to build off of one another;

In 8:30 the message is more geared to the individual;

The 10:45 message addresses the church as a whole;

So before diving into our conversation, I will start off with saying how much I have missed you church family; both online and in person.

My family and I had a wonderful vacation and I thank you for allowing me to have that time away;

I go into a little more of our vacation in the earlier sermon, but I what I will say that Florida is great with being able to go the beach nearly everyday;

Although I am disappointed that I did not run into any gators from afar;

Although I will say that Stephen and I did get thrown for a loop at the site of this fella (show alligator pic) that was in a pond at an amusement park that we were at in Kissimmee....

Naturally it is not real, but me being the typical tourist had to stare at it for a while to make sure.....

But again we had a great time!

But even in all of that, there is no place like home.....

I love Lincoln NE and we are glad to be back.

So during this vacation, I did get a lot of rest;
However, I spoke earlier how I also used this time to revisit some aspects of my own faith.

In our earlier dialogue, the theme of covenant was mentioned again in the passage of Jeremiah 34;
And because this is like the 4th time or so that our lectionary has presented this word to us; I thought it worthy to take some time to explore what some of the differences and similarities there were between the Old Covenant that led the Israelites out of Egypt; and the New Covenant, that begins to shed some light about Jesus and Jesus' mission.

I also thought it crucial to spend some time exploring why this covenant is so important to God, because if you and I can wrap our heads around why God wants to have this connection with humanity so badly, then we

can better understand why Jesus soul is so troubled in our passage today.

So the takeaway from the earlier sermon is that God desires humanity to let God in;

God desires us to let God into our hearts;

And God is unapologetically relentless in trying to convey this desire;

For God in the Old Covenant shows up in the story of the burning bush with Moses, proclaiming Moses to be the leader that would guide God's people out of the land of Egypt;

And as God's people evolved and transitioned on and newer generations and nations arose;

When God sensed that God's people were drifting away; God established a New Covenant that would reiterate the same desire but hopefully more clearly now;

That God is still with the people then and God is still with the people now!

So much so, that even the knowledge of Jesus impending death was something that Jesus was willing to endure.

So where I would like to pitch my sermonic tent this morning is exploring why?

Why did Jesus not let this metaphorical cup of his own blood pass from him?

For as we enter into our gospel this morning;

The hour which Jesus had known was ahead of Him was now close at hand.

But Jesus agony of soul was not the result of fear or self-pity.

It was the same as that expressed at the grave of Lazarus (11:33) when He reacted so strongly to the unbelief around Him and to the necessity of allowing Lazarus to die and be raised again as evidence of His life-giving powers.

In this instance church, Jesus was troubled as He faced the opposition and misunderstanding and moral

blindness of the Jews at a time when Gentiles were making earnest inquiry about Him.

Jesus groaned within Himself at the awful necessity which lay ahead.

Jesus knew that that which would provide salvation for all humanity would also bring condemnation to those who refused to believe and accept.

It was not a pleasant prospect for the one who loved even His enemies enough to die for them.

And so our Gospel tells us that Jesus prayed with a troubled soul.

Jesus prayed for strength to endure, and He prayed that the God's will would be done as it had been done throughout His life.³

³ Exegesis done mainly from the Wesleyan Bible Commentary; Volume 4

Blaney, H. J. S. (1966). [The Gospel according to St. John](#). In *Matthew-Acts* (Vol. 4, pp. 433–435). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

And this is where I will transition us into a dialogue that I would invite us to keep exploring in the days that leads up to Easter and beyond;

For the theology that most of us I would imagine stems from an understanding that Jesus had to die as an atonement for our sins.

In the Old Testament, humanity tried to atone for our sins on our own; through gracious offerings to the Lord involving an unblemished animal of some sort;

All of the specifications of the nature of the offering can be found in the books of Numbers and Leviticus mainly. However, most of us have been taught that these types of offerings were not enough for humanity to earn ultimate salvation;

So most of our embedded theology is wrapped up in verses such as John 3:16 that says that **16** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

So this is a long way of naming that the embedded response from most of us who identify as a Christian to my question of why Jesus had to die would be, “it’s simple Kirstie....Jesus had to die for our sins, so that we may all have eternal life.”

It says it right here.....

So let me just say this, that my embedded theology is rooted in a very high cross theology and I also have a very high Christology.

If you remember many moons ago I preached on Adam Hamilton’s book on John, where he stated that a high christology focuses more on the divinity aspect of Christ and a huge emphasis on the after life with Jesus in eternity;

A low Christology focuses more on the missional service aspect of Jesus when he was physically on Earth;

But a solid theology strives to land somewhere in the middle; capturing the essence of Jesus as both divine and human;

So folks, I have evolved as a theologian myself and feel called to identify a heart to heart with you as the church;

That as a church we must go deeper in our quest for the why, because often times the church as a whole typically reflects one aspect of Jesus mission.

For either you will find yourself in a worship space that is heavily atonement theory and salvation oriented;

Or you will find yourself in a worship space that reflects Jesus teachings on Earth; not addressing much of what occurs beyond the here and the now.

Furthermore, as I am wrapping up almost my second year in this beautiful reconciling church community;

A community seeking to be inclusive to all people regardless of how we might identify ourselves in the US Census;

I am beginning to see **that a theology that only represents the afterlife**, does not address issues as to how for instance, 8 people of Asian descent can be murdered in three spas in Atlanta, Georgia.

A theology that only represents the afterlife, does not address the sobering reality that for some families, a stimulus check will only get them through a couple of months if they are lucky;

A theology that only represents the afterlife does not address the staggering rate of suicide in our youth and young adults.

And on the flip side **a theology that focuses on mainly the service of Jesus** while on Earth, normally leaves those who have approached loss as it pertains to death feeling just as incomplete;

A theology that focuses solely on the service of Jesus while on Earth, often in my experience leaves people in a state of immobility, when things like for instance, a pandemic event hits the world all at once; leaving many of us in isolation with all of these emotions and questions and no one to discuss them with.

So **a theology that lands somewhere in the middle;** that captures both Jesus as divine and human ;is one

that is not just more comprehensive, but I believe it better reflects the work of the reconciling church.

For a **theology somewhere in the middle** lends itself to be able to explore questions such as why; leaving us more open and in tune to the living and active Spirit of God's love and Word; that is always active and evolving as we evolve.

So the reason why church, I spent some time exploring God's covenant both old and new in the earlier sermon; is so that you and I can really begin to unpack who God really is;

So that you and I can really begin to know God on a personal level, so that we might reflect God's character as a church community on every level; through our time, talents, gifts, service and witness.

So friends, **please do not think that I have abandoned the comfort** that comes with the fact that I will be able to see my dad again and all of the other great cloud of witnesses that have passed on before me;

Please do not misinterpret me in this quest of the why; to think that I am not awaiting that day when I will be able to see Jesus face to face and he hopefully says to me, *Well done my good and faithful servant!*

On the contrary, I am beginning to think that part of **how we become a good servant**, is by asking these questions that invite us to come together; with the hope that everyone knows how God truly feels about them.

How I believe we embody the role of becoming a good servant, is by working tirelessly until we can ***Do all the good we can, in all the ways we can, to all the souls we can, in every place we can, at all the times we can, with all the zeal we can, as long as ever we can; until thy kingdom come thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven.***

So for me this is the place where I have evolved to as to why Jesus soul was troubled,

Because in my heart, I am painfully aware that there are people who have been excluded from this covenant that was supposed include everyone;

A covenant of love;

A covenant where we all are considered to be a part of God's family;

A covenant that our Triune God has named roughly 313 times in the Old Testament and 31 times in the New Testament, if you and I were to stick with just the NRSV translation alone;

Which tells me that the why of it all is worth exploring on every level;

Why was Jesus soul troubled so much?

Can the woes of Jesus soul be simply summarized in one verse John 3:16?

Or is there more to this story that needs to be explored?

For in my life I have learned that part of my personal success involves discerning what metaphorical hill I am willing to die on as it involves relating to people and standing up for what I believe is right;

So for instance, you won't find me battling over too many things as it pertains to day to day church life;

I am not one to have too many discussions about day to day operations as it pertains to ministry;

If you want white lilies for Easter...so be it....

If you prefer sweet n low versus Splenda for your coffee during the fellowship hour...fantastic!

For I stopped by to say that I am taking my queue from Jesus on this one;

That there are some things in life, when conflict comes our way; sometimes our posture in the church may need to be that of Jesus; simply writing in the sand when the community brought the woman to be stoned for adultery as Jesus patiently waited for room to finally be able to speak.

Jesus did not get sidetracked from his ultimate mission of love and inclusion for all;

Jesus didn't even appear to get riled up; that aspect I still need Jesus to help me with;

Because there are some things that admittedly that I allow to rile me up when instead I need to just draw in the sand I suppose!

Now in this story of the woman about to get stoned for adultery; where the other half escaped off to without a hitch...that is a whole other sermon for a whole other day.....because if I dwell too much on the hypocrisy of it all; this sermon may never end!

However in what is involved in our gospel today; Jesus is giving me as the reader the clue (and perhaps you may resonate with what I am about to say), that whereas it may not be timed to get riled up if that is not your style; but let's just say we might want to pay close attention to what is happening here;

Because when a word like covenant is mentioned 313 times in the Old Testament and 34 times in the New

Testament; not to mention that our gospel informs us that Jesus soul is troubled enough to be willing to die

on behalf of this covenant between God and humanity;

Let's just say that this is something as a church that we need to keep dialoguing about;

So I will leave this sermon as a to be continued as we journey with Jesus over these next few weeks; inviting us as a church community to submerge ourselves in

these sermons with a spirit of inquiry and careful examination;

For all of the sermon series that we have experienced together up until now; *Power of Story, Holy Darkness, Awakening and Heart to Heart*; have been designed to help prepare us for this Holy Disruption;

A Holy Disruption that you and I will hopefully see is parallel to some of the experiences we are witnessing in our world today;

A Holy Disruption that will hopefully reveal some key steps for what our work of reconciliation and repair may entail for the important work to help the Church move forward.

For just as the closing of our gospel today reveals that those present heard the voice upon Jesus upon him declaring that his soul was troubled;

Some regarded it as thunder while still others thought it was the voice of an angel; either way it would seem to indicate that it was a sound which not all could interpret.

The prayer that I leave with us all is that by the time Easter morning makes its glorious appearance to us; **is that we will all hear something;**

My prayer **is that we all might hear something**, that will allow us to experience the weight of what Jesus is about to embark upon and be transformed by the passion of God's love and grace for us all.

My prayer **is that we might all hear something**, in a way that might encourage us to keep exploring the heart of the issues that are being lifted up in these texts that might inform our work as a reconciling community; and yes get even riled up about some of these issues!

Finally, my prayer is **that we all might hear something**, that might infuse a Spirit of love so palpable that we as a church community will become an undeniable force of God's love that cannot be reckoned with;

For this is the **Holy Disruption** that the church needs,

This is **the Holy Disruption** that the world needs.

Let the Church say Amen!