



“God Bond: Sticky Jesus”

Fifth Sunday in Lent
Saturday and Sunday, March 17–18, 2018
All Services
The Reverend John H. Brock
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

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

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

Most of us are able to go our entire lives without having our hearts touched. We may be moved by something beautiful, or a touching movie. We may feel our “heart strings” tugged by those commercials about abused, mistreated animals (and don’t try to pretend you’re not moved - you might change the channel, but you still feel bad for them). Hopefully, each of us has felt in our hearts some aspect of love for another person.

But that’s not what I’m talking about. I know there are a few of us here, and I am one of them, whose heart has, **literally**, been touched by, been held by, another human being. In my case, it was when I had quadruple by-pass surgery.

After my surgery, I didn’t think to ask Dr. Jaik what my heart looked like. I was a bit more interested in simply feeling my heart *beat* one second to the next. But as I was reading the scripture for today, I wondered, hypothetically: Could Dr. Jaik see God’s covenant written on my heart? Could he tell, just by looking at my heart, that I tried to live as God would have me live?

I know, that’s not *really* a fair question. I don’t honestly expect anyone to be able to see a *physical* difference in my heart due to my *faith*. Hopefully, those working on me could see a change in my heart for the good *after* the surgery, with blood flowing to all the parts of my heart. But how many of us, and I’m including myself in this, how many of us can be identified as being believers by the way we live, by the things we say, by the deeds we do - by what it written on our hearts?

The prophet Jeremiah lived at a really lousy time in the history of the Children of Abraham. He didn’t get along with King Zedekiah, which is never a good thing. The people in the kingdom of Judah had gotten rather a bit cocky. A few decades prior, the Assyrians had invaded the northern kingdom of Israel, and totally wiped them out. The Assyrians then headed south, came into Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem, and, then, eventually, left.

There was great rejoicing when the Assyrians left. All sorts of people were proclaiming that the Lord God was a great God and would never let anything happen to Jerusalem. Remember, God had made a covenant with the second king, David, that

there would always be a descendant of David's on the throne in Jerusalem. The people in Jeremiah's day were interpreting that as there would always be a Jerusalem under Jewish control.

What they **didn't** take into account was that a great deal of the people were choosing to either supplement their worship of the Lord God Almighty with the worship of *other* gods, or they were out right ignoring Lord God Almighty altogether and living for themselves, or these gods from the surrounding countries.

Along comes Jeremiah, saying:

*Look, folks, we have turned away from worshiping the Lord God Almighty. If we Do Not Return, God is going to allow our enemies to come in and take Jerusalem. And we will **not** like that.*

To which the people pretty much all responded:

Shut up, Jeremiah. The Lord God Almighty loves us and is never going to let Jerusalem fall.

I'll give you three guesses as to what eventually happens during Jeremiah's lifetime (here's a hint: it's called The Exile).

Our reading today comes at a point where Jeremiah is reminding the people of what God **has** done for them, what God **is** doing for them, and what God **will** do for them, so long as they continue to follow God's ways. And in order that they will *always* remember how God calls them to live, always remember that God stays with them no matter what is going on in their lives, regardless of whether they have brought it on themselves or not, Jeremiah tells them that God is giving them a new promise, this new covenant: this promise of self-accountability, of forgiveness. And God is going to put right where they will never lose it: right on their hearts.

The word of God will stay with them, will *stick* with them, in ways they cannot even begin to fathom, because God has made it part of their very core. God has bound that word into their very fabric of their being.

And maybe you're saying,

Okay, God has done this for the people of Jeremiah's day. But that was 2,500 years ago. But what about us, today?

Guess what happens at baptism? That same *Word of God* given to the people of Jeremiah's day, has been passed down from then until now. That same covenant is given to us, *through* Christ, at our *baptism*, because of Jesus' death.

So, here's an interesting thing: Do you know how I was held together after my heart operation? Most folks who have an operation like mine joke about becoming part of the "zipper club", because of the way our scars look like a zipper on our chest, after our skin is sewn. Except my incision *wasn't* **sewn** back together: Dr. Jaik used Superglue to hold me skin. It was less likely to get infected, he said. Also, glue doesn't leave as noticeable of a scar.

But ***I*** know that scar is there. ***I*** see it every morning, looking in the mirror. I know it's there, when I have a shirt & jacket on, or my fancy pastor clothes. I **know** my glued together scar is there, because I can feel my heart beating. I **know** that God's love and forgiveness and strength are there, because those are the promises of my baptism; because Jeremiah told me God has put them on my heart.

I **know** that God is with me, and loves me, and forgives me, and gives me strength. **And**, I know that God is with **you**, and loves **you**, and forgives **you**, and gives **you** strength. Because our God is a faithful God and sticks with us in all things.

Amen.

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