

Sunday March 21, 2021 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Jeremiah 31:31-34
“Written on the Heart”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes) In pairs or groups of three, have participants share their responses to the question, “Are you fond of snakes? Why or why not?”

Jeremiah 31:31-34 Context. Jeremiah was a prophet who lived in Jerusalem when the Babylonians destroyed the city and the Temple in 586 BC. He speaks of the covenant (promise) that God made with the Israelites when they were freed from bondage in Egypt: that God would lead and bless the people if they followed God’s laws. But the people ignored their part of the bargain, and so, when Jerusalem was destroyed the people suffered. But at the height of their suffering, Jeremiah proclaims that God will forgive their failures and will make a new covenant with them “written on their hearts” so that they will instinctively know what God wants of them.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 again.

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- How is this new covenant that God will make different from the first? [The defining act of the first covenant was the Exodus. This passage only hints at the new covenant’s defining act coming through forgiveness.]
- How is this new covenant similar to the first? [In the first covenant, the relationship was characterized as a marriage (v. 32). In this new covenant, God describes the relationship as one where we shall be God’s people.]
- How is our covenant relationship with God both binding and freeing? (See also Matthew 10:39.)
- During Lent, we are reminded how far from living more fully into this covenant relationship we are as individuals and as a community of faith. We don’t always act out of love for God and neighbor. We don’t always act as those who have God’s law written on our hearts. How might Lenten practices, such as denying ourselves certain luxuries, become acts of reminders of the abundant life we are called to live?

- As a group, find a prayer to read and recite together. You might use the **Confession and Pardon** from *The United Methodist Hymnal* or the **Prayer for Confession of Sin** from the *Book of Common Prayer*. What insights do you gain from these prayers? How might praying these prayers or similar prayer daily become a helpful prayer practice?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Covenant-making God, you desire our freedom – the freedom to serve and love you and our neighbors with our whole being. Through our humility and the rending of our hearts, create in us a new passion for obedience to your ways and to see all experience the freedom that comes from serving you. Enable us to see the hurts and pains others experience that we might better respond as the covenant people of God. Amen. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.