

Reflection for March 17, 2024 – Heart-Health

Inspired by Jeremiah 31:31-34 and John 12:20-33

Shrove Tuesday, 2016 was a fun day. I was on hand at Kamloops United helping to serve pancakes. I was working there coordinating an Indigenous Justice initiative.

Late that night, and for the second night in a row, I had rather bad reflux. It didn't matter what I did, the situation could not be relieved. The Gaviscon tablets were just not doing their job. I was sitting up in bed when the terrible chest pains began. It felt like 50 pounds of potatoes were sitting on my diaphragm.

Off to the hospital we go. Yes Mr. McLean, you have had a heart attack, and a pretty good one. I learned shortly after that, that I had several blockages which would need to be looked after. Off to Kelowna I go hoping that stents could be placed in the troublesome spots rather than undergo open heart surgery.

The surgeon comes into my waiting room and says, "well Mr. McLean, we are not sure what we can do for you, but we will try our best." What the heck is that supposed to mean? Great bedside manner, eh? Well, I don't want to spend all my reflection time going over my personal health issues. Suffice to say, the stents went in beautifully. Here they are. Also thankfully, I am still here to talk about it.

It astounds me as I think back on that event, one minute I am in serious trouble, and then, after a 20-minute procedure which involves a catheter into the heart, I'm all set for another few hundred thousand K. Amazing. God wrote God's love upon my heart that day.

Do any of you remember the Science Fiction Show, "The Fantastic Voyage?" That was 1966. One of the stars was Raquel Welsh! The theme was that a team of doctors inside a specialized submarine could be shrunk small enough to be injected into the human blood stream. Once mobile, they could travel through the body and repair all sorts of things like blood clots and aneurisms. I expect they could unclog arteries too.

Imagine with me and visualize yourself as a tiny you. You have a specialized kind of scuba suit and miniature scuba tank. And you have a specialized tool kit. You are injected into the blood stream of an ill patient and with your specialized tools you swim up into the heart. You come upon a nasty bit of plaque in the Superior Vena Cave and begin to remove it. Soon the clogged passageway is cleared, and your job is done. Healthy heart restored you return to base and are extracted through a specialized pipette and restored to your former self. Magnificent. But alas, only in the movies. And that's too bad.

In the book of Jeremiah we find numerous stories where "The Lord" came to him prophesizing restoration for Israel and Judah, and a joyful return of the Exiles. We heard today that God would restore the covenant made years ago in the time of Moses. God would make a promise to be there always. This was God's covenant law. God's love would be permanently embedded in everyone's heart.

We know this already, but Jeremiah reminds us that the God of the Hebrew people, our God today, is like a cardiovascular surgeon, healing hearts. Of course, God's spirit presence does that in a very different way. The spirit's healing is not an invasive mechanical process where something is physically changed. And to be sure, there are no infinitely small humans swimming among the blood cells to do body repairs on God's behalf.

God's promise of love is cast upon our hearts means we are never separated from the essence of kindness, generosity, empathy, and compassion, which defines the Holy Presence. That promise is, that there is always a listener to prayers shared and doubts experienced. It is the guarantor which says there will be no judgement of situation or circumstance. It is the covenantal law that affirms if and when we make mistakes, we are still cherished. Love written on all of our hearts is assurance light always prevails, hope always transcends.

God wrote her love on my heart that day of my surgery and also upon all of those who have had similar experiences. God can also write his love upon all the hearts of those who are lonely, depressed, scared or uncertain. The arteries plugged with fear, anger and trepidation can be unplugged and life can flow through them again.

But God cannot do it all alone. Holy Love needs a helping hand. Better said, Holy Love needs many helping hands.

A few minutes ago, we sang out loudly the lyrics to a great Hymn, "It Only Takes a Spark – Pass It On." Listen again to the first verse of that song.

**It only takes a spark to get a fire going,
and soon all those around, can warm up in its glowing:
that's how it is with God's love,
once you've experienced it:
you spread God's love to everyone,
you want to pass it on.**

You spread God's love to everyone, you want to pass it on.

Please, please, please do pass it on. Pass on the God given love that flows within your veins. Pass on something to which there is no antidote, a good dose of kindness, generosity, and sympathy. Pass on your authentic egoless self. Pass on grace and forgiveness. Greet someone with a big smile, a handshake, or a warm hug (ask first). God needs our help and that is God working in you.

".....and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD," So offers the prophet Jeremiah.

From the least to the greatest, all shall know the Lord. All shall know God. All shall have Holy Love emblazoned on their hearts.

That is kin-dom reality language and God can use your help in bringing that to a reality. You don't need to take 7 years of post graduate study and become a thoracic surgeon to do it. And we don't need to wait upon science to create miniature robotic structures that can be injected to do that job either. We can do it ourselves.

Through the God living within you, you can bring to every soul a healthy heart with God's love written in **BOLD LETTERS**.

We can do it! And that is much better than the reception I received when I was an emergency patient at Kelowna General and the surgeon said, "we are not sure what we can do for you, but we will try our best."

Thanks for listening this morning. Amen