

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Look Up

Read Section Introduction

Read pages 17-18 *Relationship With God: An Upward Focus*

Scripture

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NRSV)

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It 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. ³³But 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. ³⁴No 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.

Sermon Focus

Our self-examination questions for this week are questions focused *upward*, toward God. There is a difference between knowing about God and knowing God. We can know all the Bible verses, four-syllable theological words, worship practices, and Biblical names for God, and still not have a relationship with our creator. But it is in an actual relationship with God that we experience salvation, eternal life.

John Wesley wrote, “By salvation I mean not barely (according to the vulgar notion) deliverance from hell, or going to heaven, but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health [and] its original purity, a recovery of the divine nature, the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness in justice, mercy, and truth.” God offers us eternal life and life abundant, that begins right now and can last in every moment.

And God has worked across generations to make this clear. In the scripture we just read from Jeremiah we hear God longing to save us, and calling us out. The story in Jeremiah is the story of a broken relationship. “The Exile” is the story of broken relationship with God. To be away from Jerusalem was to be away from God. Jeremiah 31 offers a “restart” for the people’s relationship with God.

For so long, God’s people tried to repair their relationship with God, with creation, and with each other by following the Law, by following a list of rules of what should and shouldn’t happen. It is here in Jeremiah that we begin to understand that the Law, the covenant is not about knowing a list of rules and following them. It’s about a relationship. It’s about having God’s will “written on our hearts.” It means that the needed reparation between us and God,

creation, and each other, will not come about by following a list of rules. It will come about when we build relationship.

This is as true with God, as it is with our neighbor. We can't just know about each other. We have to take the time to know each other. And when that relationship with God is healed, we experience salvation. Not an empty faith, but one where God's goodness fills every corner of our being.

The self-examination questions for this week are focused upward. They are meant to help us examine how our relationship with God is going, where we may need to do a bit more on our part, and where God may be reaching out to us, waiting for us to reach back.

Questions of Self-Examination

1. Is Jesus real to me?
2. Am I enjoying prayer?
3. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
4. Did the Bible live in me today?
5. Did I disobey God in anything?
6. Do I pray about the money I spend?
7. Do I give time for the Bible to speak to me every day?

Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.