

Heart Scriptures, Readings and Songs

God's Heart

Reader 1: Deuteronomy 7:7, 10:12-22 “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a treasured possession. It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set her heart on you and chose you. It was because God loved you. So now what does the Lord require of You? Only to walk in God's ways, to love him and serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul. Although heaven belongs to God and the earth and all that is in it, yet the Lord set her heart in love on your ancestors and chose you. Circumcise then, the foreskin of your heart. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and widow, who loves foreigners, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. You shall worship God who is your praise.”

Heart Hymn of Praise:

Hard Hearts

Reader 2: Genesis 6:4 The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved God to the heart.

Reader 3: Exodus 7: Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Aaron and Moses performed miracles but the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts; so Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart.

Reader 1: Psalm 95:8 Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah in the wilderness when you refused to trust God. Matthew 15: The people honour me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. Luke 24:38. Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts. John 14: Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid. Because I have said these things to you, your hearts are filled with sorrow.

Heart Hymn of Lament:

Reader 2: Psalm 51:10-12. Create in me a clean heart O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Reader 3: Jeremiah 31:33 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel. 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. No longer will they teach one another saying, 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.

Renewed Hearts

Reader 1: Heartbreak and Hope for New Life from On the Brink of Everything by Parker Palmer

A disciple asks the rabbi: Why does the Scripture tell us to place these words *upon* our hearts? Why does it not tell us to place these holy words *in* our hearts? The rabbi answers: It is because as we are, our hearts are closed, and we cannot place the holy words in our hearts. So we place them on top of our hearts. And there they stay until, one day, the heart breaks and the words fall in.

Heartbreak comes with the territory called being human. When love and trust fail us, when what once brought meaning goes dry, when a dream drifts out of reach, when a devastating disease strikes, or when someone precious to us dies, our hearts break and we suffer...

Suffering breaks our hearts, but the heart can break in two quite different ways. There's the brittle heart that breaks into shards, shattering the one who suffers as it explodes, and sometimes taking others down. Then there's the supple heart, the one that breaks open, not apart, the one that can grow into greater capacity for the many forms of love. Only the supple heart can hold suffering in a way that opens to new life.

How can I make my heart more supple? The answer, I think, is to exercise my heart by stretching it, the way a runner stretches the leg muscles to avoid injury. With regular exercise, my heart is less likely to break apart into shards that may become shrapnel and more likely to break open into largeness these days, my opportunities for heart-stretching increase along with the losses that come with aging.

My heart is stretched every time I'm able to take in life's little deaths: a friendship gone sour, a mean-spirited critique of my work, failure at a task that was important to me. I can also exercise my heart by taking in life's little joys: a small kindness from a stranger, the infectious giggle of a two year old.

Thankful Hearts

Reader 2: 1 Samuel 2:1. Hannah prayed and said, My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God. There is no Holy One like the Lord, no one besides you, there is no Rock like our God. Psalm 105:3. Rejoice in God's holy name. Let the hearts of those who seek God rejoice.

Reader 3: Luke 24:32. Were our hearts not burning within us as Jesus walked with us and opened the scripture to us? John 16:22 So you have pain now but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy away from you.

Heart Hymn of Thanksgiving

Generous Hearts

Reader 1:

If I Can Stop One Heart From Breaking by Emily Dickinson

If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain. If I can ease one life the aching, or cool one pain, or help one fainting ruin into his nest again, I shall not live in vain.

Reader 2: Acts 2:46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,

Reader 3: 2 Corinthians 3:3 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Spoken Benediction

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Sung Benediction