

The Hour Is Now

Jeremiah 31:31–34

Psalms 51:3–4, 12–13, 14–15

Hebrews 5:7–9

John 12:20–33

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“Forgive and forget” was probably derived from this text, and probably because only God can do both at the same time. Human hearts have a harder time letting go. God’s attitude is all hope and optimism as he asserts that, under the new covenant, people won’t need instruction in God’s ways. This new covenant won’t be broken like the stone tablets of the old law, for it will be written not on stone but on human hearts. But can God be so naïve? Does God not realize that hearts are broken as easily as stone? Does God forget that people don’t always listen to their hearts, that resistance to law and even to love is writ so deeply into the human soul that it resists light, scorns love, and shuns forgiveness? Of course he does. He made the human heart and knows its contours better than we do.

God’s hope flows from the fact that the new covenant won’t take the form of tablets but of a Son, a human person with a heart of flesh like ours. The Son will, through his suffering, “become the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:9). Obeying him means learning that forgiving and forgetting requires dying. We have to let go of hurts and anger and resentment, let them rot away in the grave of forgetfulness, in order to rise to a life of freedom, hope, and light. When we climb the cross as Jesus did, we, too, will be glorified and our lives, like his, will produce much fruit.

“ . . . he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:9).



SHARING FAITH

- ◆ The phenomenon of death leading to new life is embedded within all of nature. How have you experienced it in your life? Have the experiences built or challenged your faith?
- ◆ Is God’s law as apparent to the human heart as Jeremiah asserts? Why do we so easily forget God’s willingness to forgive and forget?
- ◆ Jesus freely accepted death to bring us eternal life. Is there something difficult that you need to accept, or something that you need to give up for the sake of God’s Kingdom? How can the suffering you experience in your faithfulness to God lead to more abundant life for yourself and for others?

LIVING THE LITURGY

- ◆ The word *obedience* sometimes wrongly connotes a robotic compliance. Find and discuss some examples of contemporary people whose “obedience” you find noble and inspiring.
- ◆ Using different colors of paper, trace and cut out several small heart shapes. On each write an aspect of God’s law that you seek to live out more fully. Place them, like seeds, within the pages of your Bible and pray that rich soil will help them root and grow.
- ◆ Prepare your family for today’s readings by talking a little about some of the people in your faith community who have given up things for themselves in order to help others. Many people give their time, talent, and treasure to keep your parish vibrant for all who come there.