

# Revealing Your Heart

February 13, 2011 Message for Whitehorse United Church  
by Jennifer Moorlag

**Hebrew Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

**Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9**

**Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:21-37**

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts bring us closer to you, O God our strength and our Redeemer. Amen

So here is the recap of the scriptures Sharon just read, obey or death awaits, poke your eye out, cut off your hand, adultery, divorce, broken-ness. Well....Happy Valentine's Day! Now I was pretty excited that I got to preach the day before Valentine's Day – I must admit I do love the trappings of Valentine's Day. For starters, permission to give and eat chocolate – then there are the homemade cards with red construction paper, white doilies and lots of glitter – all good! and then I read those readings. I thought hummmmm how exactly am I going to do this. OK – remember how you have been taught – let the readings wash over you for inspiration; write down any thoughts that come to you during the week; research and explore the text. Sigh.....ok....I did find some things that connect to the text but what I felt overwhelmingly was...maybe I shouldn't have volunteered for this week!

What you find is that there is a sharp contrast between the first reading, which makes obedience sound easy, and the Gospel, which shakes us up. The Epistle, as usual, continues on its separate theme.

In the first reading we are specifically told that the Law is a comfortable fit. The Gospel, on the other hand, gives a powerful challenge, based on the Law, but going far beyond. Last week, we read of Jesus coming, not to upset the Law, but to fulfill it... Now, using the formula, "You have heard... but I tell you," he offers a powerful challenge. Is he, after all, setting a new and more upright standard of behaviour? Is he asking his followers to go to the very roots of the Law and live by them? Is he jarring our funny bone to make us aware of our common humanity? Is he trying to evoke our humility so that we are better prepared for forgiveness? It seems that his teaching, made into legislation has had unlovely consequences, but, as statements to ponder, parallel to his parables, they are very challenging and enriching.

Some historical context for the readings might be helpful too - for instance, on divorce we should try to understand the conditions in which women of Jesus' day might be cast out. Equally, we may note that the "eye for an eye" rule was, itself, a significant step in downplaying merciless feuds, limiting retaliation to the same injury that was first inflicted. Incidentally, I think I was taught that, while legislation may outline the least that one may expect of citizens, "Torah," which is both "Law" and "Teaching" presents a higher level to which we may aspire. Jesus' message is certainly consistent with that. (Stewart Clarke)

So, now I had some context for the readings, but I was finding that things were still pretty harsh. What was swirling around in my head was the idea of brokenness – divorce, adultery, cutting off or our body parts and then I woke up on Wednesday morning remembering a story from one of my favourite TV shows. There is a guy walking down the street - alone, despairing...and he falls into a pit. He tries to climb out, or find a way out – but he is trapped. Along comes a Doctor. Our guy yells out – doc, can ya help me, I stuck down here. The doctor says, "just a minute" and he tosses down a prescription. Then a priest comes along and the guy again hollers, Father, can you help me, I'm stuck down here. The priest responds, "I will pray for you my son". Now after a while, Bob, a friend, happens by. "Bob, buddy, can you help me out? I am stuck down here. Much to our guy's surprise, Bob jumps down into the pit. "Bob, what are you doing – now we are both trapped down here." "Yes" Bob replies, "but I have been here before, and I know the way out".

Interesting.....

I did a little research on our friend St. Valentine – very interesting. I guess I hadn't really thought about it too much before, but turns out, not really named after one person. According to Catholic history it is probably named for several "Valens" and the feasting day of February 14 was taken off the Catholic Calendar of Saints. However, Martyr Valentinus remains on the list of Saints. Interestingly for my purposes – St. Valentine is the patron Saint of happy marriages, love, affianced couples....and Beekeepers. Yep, you heard me. Bee keepers! Isn't that something. St. Valentine is the patron St. of people who work with bees VOLUNTARILY – so that we can have the sweet rewards of their work; honey, and those yummy beeswax candles! Bee keepers who risk for great reward, beekeepers who must do that work for the sheer love of it....Interesting.

The other thought I had was around the idea of giving our whole heart to God and to others as I chatted about with the children. Many of us are or have been broken-hearted, or we spend so much time

protecting our hearts (sometimes with good reason!), that we aren't really sure we have a whole heart to give. As you can imagine, this sermon has taken up a lot of my thoughts this week – never very far from my own heart or consciousness. Last night I was talking with my mom, debriefing a wonderful day taking in the Hockey Day in Canada celebrations – and she asked, so is Hockey Day going to end up in the sermon. I laughed and said – not sure how I would manage that. But later in the evening I was thinking about what I was going to do with the learning together time and it struck me that a lot of what is involved with giving your whole heart to God or anyone else is revealing your heart. Letting everyone see what's inside – embracing what makes our hearts and lives different from everyone else's. Risk. Yesterday, the City of Whitehorse and all of Yukon revealed a huge heart to the rest of Canada. I work with several of the Hockey Day organizers and I saw the effort that went into pulling yesterday off – lots of risk, lots of reward and a ton of heart. We were at the MacBride Museum (this is a plug for the Yukon Hockey History exhibit – if you haven't seen it, you really should take the time to do it – but if you want to read everything, make sure you give yourself a good chunk of time!) Anyway, the exhibit is amazing! The collection of memorabilia that has been loaned to the museum is astounding: The love for the game and our history with it, palpable. Treasures lovingly preserved and then shared – revealed.

Everyone from the driver of our bus, to the children giving out Hockey Day tattoos, to the woman who was taking pictures of people with the Stanley Cup revealed their heart and the heart of this city. An amazing Valentine's Day gift.

In this Epiphany season, it is Jesus who shows us the brighter path to walk. It is Jesus who shines a light into our hearts revealing who and what we are. It is Jesus who shows us life - making the choice that Deuteronomy offers an easy one.

Here's the thing, battered, broken and broken-hearted – we often feel like we are in that big 'ol pit with no way out. But God is with us in our brokenness and he sent his only son to jump into the pit with us, so we are not alone, so we have someone to say "I have been here before – and I know the way out".

Amen.