

John 12:20-33
March 17, 2024

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, what do you know by heart? Phone number, address, pledge of allegiance, Lord's prayer, birthdays, anniversary...

And, how did you come to know these things by heart?

Repetition, important...

Now – let me ask you another question - Do you know God by heart?

That one may seem challenging unless you take it as – do you know God by God's own heart? Does your heart know God's heart?

And, how do we know God's heart?

Through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, especially in his death and resurrection.

God's heart, which we know by our own heart, is that God is merciful and abounding in steadfast love for us. Basically, as far as God is concerned, we are to die for.

God's compassion for us is so great that Jesus goes through death and on into resurrection for us. That is God's heart, and we know it in our own hearts.

With our brains it may seem like a bunch of hooley. It's not logical. But, with our hearts, we know it to be true.

We know God by heart through God's heart that is known in our own hearts. God's love for us is never ending and can never be destroyed.

Knowing God by heart is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which encourages us and strengthens us for the journey.

Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent. It is the last Sunday before we head off into Holy Week with our focus on the event surrounding the Crucifixion.

The texts we have for today are here to help us get through that week, because unless we know God's heart by our own hearts, the events to come may seem damning instead of good news.

Killing God's own Son should lead to wrath and destruction, but instead it leads to everlasting life.

That's something the mind has a hard time grasping, but the heart knows for sure.

The heart knows God's unconditional and unlimited love for us, and the heart also knows that God will do anything for us, including dying on a cross.

And in that single act of dying naked on the cross, he opens up the floodgate where all those who have ever been shamed or riddled with guilt finally know God's mercy and compassion, and they come running to him.

The Son of God does not kill. The Son of God does not seek revenge.

The Son of God forgives and brings eternal life to all those who know God by heart, who by their own heart know God's heart - the heart of a Father who loves his children so much he is willing to die in the old ways of the world in order to bring in a new kind of life, a life not of competition, judgement, or wrath, but of harmony, mercy, and forgiveness.

That is the seed that is planted at the crucifixion and the crop that grows in the resurrection.

The tree of sin and death, the cross, is replaced by a field of wheat where mercy and life grow, a crop that grows ten to twelve-fold with the beautiful grain that is the bread of life for the world.

The one seed is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and we are the seeds that are produced in the field of the resurrection, carrying the good news of resurrection with us everywhere we go because we know God by heart.

Our hearts know God's heart, and because of that we live as God's heart in the world, looking out for others as God looks out for us, continually transforming death into life whenever and wherever possible. Planting seeds of resurrection.

It's not something that we do on our own, but is God's very own Spirit living in our hearts that encourages us and enables us to be God's heart in the world.

Through the Holy Spirit, we know God by heart and are joined to God's heart where iniquity is forgiven and sins are remembered no more.

Thanks be to God. Amen.