

“written on our hearts”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

If you can, watch the YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/IVcdERzZWnc>

The experience of lockdown and the shadow of a pandemic has caused many of us to reflect on what really matters. As Christian believers, this is defined by our faith. Yet we can easily become so engrossed in what we do for God that we lose sight of our relationship with God. This was true in the life of God's people and highlighted by prophets like Jeremiah. Circumstances change us, and the experience of invasion and exile impacted God's people. But Jeremiah spoke of a people changed by God, a people so inhabited by God that they would naturally follow God's ways - "I will write my law in their hearts," he declared. We believe that this is fulfilled in Jesus, and it might cause us to stop and reflect on how we are and can be transformed by God. How has God changed us? Are we prepared to be moulded and shaped by the Spirit of God? Are we ready to let God be at work within our inner self? As we ponder the words of Jeremiah, some things to consider are:

How am I sustaining my relationship with God? Jeremiah argues that we won't need people to tell us what the law says, it won't need explaining or policing because we will be so in love with God, so transformed by God's living presence within us – that following God's laws will be the most natural thing in the world to do. God speaks of being a husband to previous generations and yearns for that relationship with his people again. The message of Jeremiah is simple – whatever your circumstances, whatever the future may or may not have in store – allow yourself to re-discover the love of God, and as you are loved by God and love God back, so you will be drawn into loving relationship with your sisters and brothers in Christ. And so the message, values and the rule and the reign of God will become evident in the lives that we live, and others will be drawn to become faithful followers of Jesus.

This is a message for everyone: We can easily fall into the trap of believing that the message is for everyone else, but God invites us to recognise that we are part of those to whom he speaks and need to embrace this for ourselves. He speaks of being known to everyone – from the least to the greatest. But within that challenge there is a message of hope and encouragement. Perhaps we feel like the "least", we may wonder if we have any place or purpose in God's Kingdom. But God clearly says that we do – no-one is any less deserving or included than anyone else. Everyone is invited.

Be transformed by God's forgiveness: God declares "I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more." This is the message of the cross – Jesus has brought forgiveness and redemption to those who can admit that we have made our mistakes and fallen short of God's standards. But take a moment to recognise that those who are pronounced as forgiven are first invited to be transformed through relationship with God. Jesus invites us to repent and be forgiven – we should not confuse repentance with apology. Repent means to turn around and go in another direction; to become visibly and obviously different – not just to say sorry. Take time to reflect on the fact that God has forgiven our faults, that we don't need to be haunted by our mistakes or condemned for our failures. God's love is infinitely greater than any shortcoming on our part. But we are called to be embraced and transformed by God's love – to be a people who are visibly and obviously different.

PRAYER

Loving God, write your words in my mind and place them in my heart. May I be so transformed through my relationship with you, that I cannot help but walk and follow in your ways. Hold me fast in your love; help me to encourage everyone to know you more, and as I am forgiven and my mistakes are forgotten, so may I be visibly changed by your love at work within me. AMEN