

Spiritual Practice 3/28

This final week of Lent - we will be exploring through the Bible Guide - four different minor prophets - rather than just one.. Each selection of scripture - incorporates verses that are quoted in important moments in the New Testament - and take on expanded meaning in the life of Jesus.

The object we'll be engaging this morning is the SEED PAPER HEART from the Lent in a Bag (if you got one) - you might want to run and go get that now... or just grab some paper and a pen - if you didn't get one!

Today's spiritual practice is inspired by the prophet Joel - where he speaks to people who have endured real crisis and hardship - and also invites them to recognize the real "blessings" that can flow from those spaces, as they orient to God.

And today's spiritual practice invites you to consider the losses and the blessings that are piled up on your heart.

The losses and blessings, both.

Our hearts seem to be the fertile ground by which we "know"/"feel"/"encounter" God. AND they also "Know"/"feel" and "HOLD" heaviness, from the reality of our lives.

IT's why over this past year, so many of us have described our hearts - **here on Virch, chatted in through these spiritual practices** - as feeling heavy... or being heartbroken ..

The loss, the grief, the pain, the tightness - has been relentless - and is what breaks our hearts.

Infact wise voices say "there is no way to be human without having your heart broken". But despite heartbreak being inevitable and a painful reality of life - there are in fact two ways a heart can break....(Parker Palmer)

- 1) Indeed our hearts can break apart into millions of shards ...of sharper and more widespread pain.

AND....

- 2) Our hearts can break open into new, flourishing life, stretched to greater capacity (capable of holding both pain and joy, heartbreak and flourishing)... tears... and love...

Here is where recognizing "blessings" in our lives is helpful ... BLESSINGS as a recognition of God with us... Proving to be a relief valve that gently open our hearts - so all of God's LOVE , the goodness, the peace, the comfort, the rest can fall into our hearts too.

THE PROPHET JOEL says there are visible blessings like "rain" - "food" - grain, wine and oil... and also the "blessing" of God's presence with us, and the Spirit poured out for us all.

I wonder for you today,

REFLECTION: What blessings and losses feel piled upon your heart?

(I'll ask you to chat this in - in just a moment...but first why don't you write them down on this little paper heart - that has all these little seeds embedded in it - write your losses and blessings on your heart.... (if you don't have it - just use some paper)..

- OBJECT: Write all your losses and blessings on the seed paper heart,

As you finish writing for now - -PAUSE now - to resume at some point later in the week - TRUST that both your losses and blessings are fertile ground from which God's presence grows. Pause to notice the seeds in the paper, flecks of God's abundance still to come.

Chat in now - what losses or blessings that rose to the top for you - as you were reflecting on this!

- PRAYER:

Inhale: Spirit

Exhale: Grow

repeat 3 times

- CLOSE: Hold this paper heart close to your own heart, honoring all that your heart can hold and grow. Tuck your heart back in its envelope for now. Close your prayer with God's reassuring words, "I will pour out my Spirit upon everyone."

God let your Spirit flow to the cracked dry spaces of our hearts now.

Let your Spirit flow to the piles of loss that are blocking your love.

Let your Spirit stir and grow new hope, ideas, wonder within us...

God - pour out your Spirit on all of us today.

Amen.