

Promises Made, Promises Broken

Persistence.

It's a laudable characteristic ---

A worldly characteristic. ---essential for keeping a promise...

...A characteristic employers **look for**,

That future spouses **hope for**.

That your Pastor **prays for**.

The world is filled with **Promises**.

But, keeping a promise – is difficult.

There are promises we make,

and then as we journey further wish we could take them back.

Like the promise I made during my interview

(be it ill-advised)

that I would stay in my first job after college **for 5 years.**

– and then **circumstances changed after 3.**

Jon finished graduate school

and an incredible job opportunity opened up

hours from where I had accepted my first job.

After careful discernment, he took the position.

And, I had to go in and tell my boss that I needed to break my promise.

It was not good. It was not a happy time. It was my fault.

I'd broken a central tenet of mine –

Learned when I was young in the form of a song...

Whene'er you make a promise.

Consider awhile its importance.

And when made, engrave it upon your heart.

Think for a moment of a promise you've made & broken. [pause]

+Maybe, the promise you are thinking of

was broken without your meaning to break it.

+*Maybe* your intentions were good, very good...
but some past heartbreak:
 a loss, a dispute, or an addiction,
 threatened your efforts to keep a promise,
 or destroyed those good intentions....

*What is it in me, the apostle Paul laments,
 That the harder I try to keep a promise
 The more readily AND quickly I break it??????*

Left to our own devices *failure seems inevitable.*
Brokenness is inevitable.

Loving God... Loving our neighbor... our promise as believers...

It's easy to say these words. But nearly impossible to follow through.
.....**At least on our own.** The world gets in the way.

*Our sin sick soul is simply unable
to love as we have promised, to love as we ought
and separates us from the LOVE that is the light that sustains us.*

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What is a sin-sick soul?

The prophets... especially Isaiah – Jeremiah – speak of it at length.

*Broken relationships **with God** and with our neighbor
are the essence of **sin.***

Our souls... fueled with the empty promises of Satan and the world,
ail with the sins of pride, lust, gluttony, lethargy, & inability to forgive.

Curiously, *this love of self* often leads to **self-loathing.**
It leads to Doubt and fear... **bitterness and depression.**

What sickness is to the body...
Sin is to the soul.

But is there a cure?

Is there a balm in Gilead that can heal the sin sick soul?

Is there a physician who has a remedy? Jeremiah laments.

You know these verses from the African American spiritual we sing.

*The balm... the physician that **can heal our souls is Jesus.***

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As we enter our Lenten season in the Gospel of Luke,

Jesus has set his sights on Jerusalem.

*It's a long walk, **nearly 10 chapters long.***

While on this journey, Jesus is living with the end in mind.

He intends to keep his promise to God.

He knows that the cross rather than a worldly throne
is his destiny.

As he travels, Jesus invites others to join him on his journey.

In many ways, their varied responses remind us of Jesus' parable
of the sower and the seed.

- *Just like the seeds that fall on rock, some, like the Samaritans in the village outright reject the good news Jesus brings,*

- Then there are those who initially accept Jesus as their Lord, but when times get tough or worldly cares get in the way, their doubt and fear rise up – and they are defeated...
like seedling planted in shallow soil,
they wither... and back away.

- And finally, there are **the seeds planted in good soil.**
...Those who recognize Jesus for who he is,
their LORD, their redeemer –

who, also come to recognize
who they are and that God loves them anyway ---
in spite of their sin-sick souls.

They realize persistence in all they do
is not possible without Christ.
And believing in Christ, ALL things are possible.

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There is great cost to those who choose to follow Jesus fully.

To those who fully commit,

*For those who place their complete trust in **God**, through Jesus Christ.*

To receive Jesus with our whole hearts

Means... putting Jesus first

Means... giving up control of our lives.

Means... holding up a mirror and

Recognizing that on our own,

We are rarely able to love, forgive,

Or keep promises meant for good.

Admitting that without God,

we too will end up in a vicious cycle

of Anger, judgment, doubt, shame, bitterness and deceit.

It means understanding that

often we are **our own worst enemy.**

To receive Jesus with our whole hearts

Means we are determined to live with the end in mind.

means are willing to die to the ways of the world,

And live as a redeemed child of God.

This walk alone... will heal our sin-sick souls.

When we come to know the Truth in this,
When we believe it in our hearts.
This is the moment of turning... or re-turning to our God...
God... who is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

God... who loves you just as you are
But doesn't want to leave you this way.

I invite you to join us the next 6 weeks,
As we take a *Healing Journey to the Cross* together.

- Spend time in prayer, fasting and serving
 - What must you set aside to make Christ first?
- Take a Lenten booklet you'll find in the Narthex and make time to read and meditate on each day's devotion.
- Follow my daily blog on our FaceBook page
- Join us for Wednesday evening Holden Evening Prayer – where Vicar Michael or I will share a meditation on a sin – sick character found in the previous Sunday's text.

Together, let's walk these next 40 days of lent –

Together, let's contemplate our sin-sick souls...
and determine

That the best we can do is do the best we can...
and let Jesus and God's grace do the rest.

Amen