

Devotion

The human heart beats 65 times a minute.

100 thousand times a day.

34 million times a year.

If you are 20 years old, that means your heart has beat 680 million times.

If you are 40 years old, your heart has beat 1 billion, 750 million times.

If you are 60, your heart has beat 2 billion, 108 million times.

If you are 80, your heart has beat 2 billion, 720 times.

What a gift your beating heart is! Your heart keeps beating as you eat your breakfast, check your email, water your garden, it beats on and on, without your even thinking about it.

Your heart is the location for much that describes your attributes and experiences. You can be a soft heart, a brave heart, a bleeding heart. You may be kindhearted, or halfhearted or dis-hearted. You can have a jealous heart, a stout heart, a broken heart... and even so, your heart just keeps beating 65 times a minute, 100 thousand times a day, 34 million times a year, without thinking about it.

Yet, all the while God is thinking about it. The word "heart" appears 830 times in the Bible and in it we are told that God is "near to the brokenhearted", God "weighs our hearts", God's "peace guards our hearts", and we are not to let "our hearts be troubled".

The Bible also tells us God's great concern is renovating our hearts: "a new heart", "a clean heart", "a justified heart", "a true heart".

Ezekiel 36:26 says "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh, says the Lord."

One of the major themes running through all of holy scripture is God's renovation project of the human heart. God's desired outcome, as Jesus said, is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength", and "love your neighbor as yourself." That's the wholeness of love that God requires. A heart bursting with the reality of God.

We are in an urgent moment. We are living through a pandemic, through collective trauma, and cultural unrest and divisiveness. Most people are experiencing fear and grieving. What is needed, above all else, is love.

This love means taking good care of yourself, being gentle with yourself and practicing self-compassion. It means loving God with more of your heart by praying now more

than ever, spending more time in the Good Book, especially those passages about God's loving faithfulness, grace and care.

This love means being compassionate, patient and supportive to those around you. Empathy is very important at this time. We are none of us at our best and if someone is snappy or rude to you, forgive them, chalk it up to the "Covid Cloud" we're under and let go. Love them as God has loved you.

We serve God by loving the Lord your God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself. Loving like that is quite an assignment. But it is how we will get through this (and we will get through this) as God's agents of love, and compassion and reconciliation.

Beloved, through it all, remember that God's got this. And know that God speaks to your beating heart, "I love you, I love you. I love you," 65 times a minute, 100 thousand times a day, 34 million times a year. Think about that.

Yours in the journey,

Pastor Kristen