

**TEXT: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

**TOPIC: God promises a renewed covenant with Israel and Judah, so people know God in spite of brokenness.**

**SUBJECT: An honest journey isn't about getting honest with God; it's about becoming honest with ourselves.**

**TITLE: An Honest Journey**

It used to be that I'd always listen to music when I'd travel in the car, often singing at the top of my lungs as I'd head down the road; even with the windows down.

That changed eight months or so, ago. Nowadays on trips, I listen more to podcasts. I discovered podcasts just about eight months or so ago. Until then, I'd never listened to them. Although I did like talk radio at one time.

The other day I had a meeting in Bogue, Kansas, so on the way there I listened to Brene Brown's two-part interview with Father Richard Rohr for about the 20<sup>th</sup> time, and then the final podcasts of the series with her sister, Ashley, which I hadn't listened to until then.

Those podcast got me to wondering how honest people are with themselves. I considered that question because I know I haven't always been honest with myself. Being honest with yourself is hard work, particularly when people are so conditioned to hiding from things they don't want to feel because they prefer to feel safe and comfortable.

When people aren't honest with themselves, the consequences can be as distressing as they were for the Israelites and the Judeans. After all, when they weren't honest with themselves, dishonesty came with a heavy price.

#### PRAYER

I don't know how much you know about ancient Israel and Judah's history. But in 722, the Assyrians invaded and overran the northern kingdom of Israel. For about 120 years, Judah remained but in 598 BCE, Babylonia laid siege to Jerusalem, which meant the deportations of much of Judah's leadership to exile in Babylonia. Then, in 587 BCE, Judah was overthrown,

Jerusalem and the temple were laid waste. I believe it was as devastating a time for the Judean people as 9-11 has been for Americans.

The Judean people believe their country was overthrown because they had broken the covenant God established with their ancestors at Sinai. The ancient Judeans failed the covenant because they reduced life to just being safe and happy. This accommodated injustices as people treated people like commodities, and people kept a record of wrongs which prevented healing. This led people to deny the changes that needed to happen, and the illusion that if they kept doing things that kept them safe and comfortable, everything would be OK. Priorities like those lead to dishonesty and brokenness that can often be hidden by shadows that hide feelings people don't want to feel.

*Does this sound familiar?*

When Judeans referenced the covenant at Mt. Sinai, their ancestors were recently-freed slaves, who had two choices moving forward for generations. One was to remember the covenant God established with them in the Ten Commandments or second, to forget about what God had done and continued doing for them. If we date this back to Adam and Eve's placement in the Garden, it's easy to see how people get hooked by a path of dishonesty rather than an honest journey.

Paths of dishonesty lead to brokenness; dishonesty fosters separation between groups of people; ultimately dishonest paths separated Judeans from God. That can result in one group of people owning another group of people. Examples of this would be America's ongoing struggle with its original sin of racism; another example would be how one person might gaslight another into submission. When brokenness is so common, it becomes so normalized.

Normalized dishonesty, I'd say, is a modern expressions of false safety and comfort that never really existed in the first place.

That's one of the reasons Lent exists. Lent is an invitation for people to take part in a journey of honesty with themselves, others, and God. In doing so, it then becomes possible where we've kept shadows to hide what we don't want to feel. Honesty disrupts the illusion of safety and comfort people would prefer to have.

An honest journey makes it possible for the new to emerge like spring flowers. An honest journey makes people get real with themselves and God. An honest journey opens doors to let God work in people's lives; thing is, God's work in people's lives often takes longer than just Lent; God's work in people's lives takes years.

I believe an honest journey has much more to do with being honest with yourself than getting honest with God. God already knows what makes you tick and God knows about your fears, anxieties, addictions, and sins. When people take an honest journey, they're no longer stuck by slavery of whatever Egypt they have in their lives.

When people embrace the covenant God has with us, they willingly participate in an honest journey where people see themselves, their lives, and often what brought them to want safety and comfort rather than the challenges an honest journey requires.

An honest journey is God's covenantal invitation not just to know our sins, but what's behind them because when people figure out what's behind them, God is there to help people to know what to do not just with their sins, but with themselves. It's like what the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:12. "For now we see in a mirror darkly, then we will see face to face; for now, we know in part, but then we will know fully even as we've been fully known." An

honest journey has the traveler seek understanding behind the emotional triggers that brought about the sin. An honest journey has travelers understand how the generations of their family have formed their lives. An honest journey requires travelers to take an honest look at what is behind the power and privilege that distorts how people see themselves and others. An honest journey gives travelers the confidence to know God is in the business of working through our travels to pluck up, break down, destroy, and overthrow, but also to build and plant what God knows we need in our lives. An honest journey reflects travelers' participation in the renewed covenant God gave the Israelites and God has given us in Christ.

We – you and I – are the travelers. I am traveling with God. Say that with me: *“I am traveling with God.”*

An honest journey is God's way of nudging you to take ownership of who you truly are in Christ because it points to the resurrection and beyond. An honest journey gives you permission to set aside everything that's not you, so you can be for your community everything God intends that you be. An honest journey gives you the strength to let go of the frustration of always trying to be what someone else wanted you to be, so you can be who it is God has always intended that you be. An honest journey remembers your baptism, restores your trust, and reminds you God's grace is all you need.

The time is coming, declares the Lord, to participate in an honest journey that may take a lifetime. Still, the sooner you grow in honesty with yourself, the sooner you see beyond snake bites and crosses to the amazing things God has in store for you.

In the name of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one God in perfect community. Amen.