

Recently a friend posted a story about “closed captioning” getting it wrong. She was watching a worship service being livestreamed from a parish she used to attend in Syracuse. As she put it, the priest that day, praying in his usual warm and compassionate way, offered these words, “God, you are always thinking about your people and you never forget us.” Apparently the closed-captioning mis-translated his words so that what came up on the computer screen read, “you never forgive us.”

Though these cruel words were not spoken, nevertheless they appeared on the screen. My heart not only breaks for those who depended upon closed captioning that day, but it breaks when I think of how true these words seem to so many people. Sure, we hear all the time about a God who loves us so much that no barrier can keep God away, but how many of us have an inner translator that gives us the wrong message about God?

- If you believe that there are too many skeletons in your closet for God to possibly love and forgive you, your inner translator is giving you the wrong message about God.
- If you believe that you are so miniscule, so invisible that God has no idea who you are, your inner translator is giving you the wrong message about God.
- If you believe that you are worthless and without dignity, not worthy of God’s love or the love of those around you, your inner translator is giving you the wrong message about God.
- If you believe that God’s love for you depends on you thinking and believing the “right” things, your inner translator is giving you the wrong message about God.
- If you believe there is any part of your day that God does not make holy, your inner translator is giving you the wrong message about God.

A long time ago the prophet Jeremiah had something to say to folks who honestly believed that God had no time for them; that they had no place in God’s heart.

*“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people... for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31).*

Not only do we have a place in God’s heart, but according to Jeremiah God is the great tattoo artist who is tattooing God’s law (love) on our hearts, and who has promised that the only thing God will “forget” are our sins.

Even the Apostle Paul had the audacity to announce that,

*“Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come...nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8).*

Oh, and then there’s Jesus who from the hardwood of the executioner’s cross, called out to God,

*“Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23).*

We talk a lot about empty tombs this time of year, but if in our talk we are putting conditions on God's love for us, that is not Easter talk. The empty tomb of Easter morning, has not only opened the gates of Heaven to all, but once and for all has squelched the inner translator who will try to convince you of a God who couldn't possibly love you. The empty tomb of Easter reveals a God whose love runs so deep, it is tattooed on our hearts. And what does God's Easter tattoo say?

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

You are loved by God forever!

Christ is Risen Indeed!

You are loved by God indeed! *(and there's nothing you can do about it.)*

Alleluia!

Peace and Love,  
Pastor Doug