

“WHAT’S IN THE DEEPEST PART OF YOUR HEART?”

Sheila Lauder, Sunday Service 6/29/2005

You’ll have to forgive me if I suddenly say “stop scratching” in the middle of this talk, it’s just that I’ve read it so much to my dogs...

When Shari Irwin, the Chair of our Sunday Services Committee, called me weeks and weeks ago and asked me to speak today, I said I would think about it and what was the subject. Shari said “What’s in the deepest part of your heart.”

I thought hard about it for a week and called Shari and said I would do it and asked for the subject once more, just so that I was absolutely clear about it. She answered again “What’s in the deepest part of your heart.”

Over the next weeks I thought about that. I thought about it a lot and it occurred to me that perhaps the subject was meant to be what was in the deepest part of your hearts...the congregation. But I wasn’t sure, so then I started thinking about what was in my deepest heart and yours too.

Bruce Bode, called me and asked me what my subject was going to be and I told him that Shari had said “what’s in the deepest part of your heart” and that’s what I was going to talk about. “You can talk about anything you want to” he said. “No” I answered, “that’s what Shari said and I’ve been thinking about it a lot and I’m committed to talking about what’s in the deepest part of your heart. “

This is a daunting subject and I don’t know that I’ve ever cogitated about anything so unrelentingly as I have cogitated about this.

It was weeks before it hit me. “What’s In the Deepest Part of Your Heart” was a rhetorical question. I had taken Shari’s words at their face value, I had taken them literally. I could have been talking to you about anything! Possibly even a subject I knew something about! But I had committed to this and I’ve stuck with it.

So, here I am about to take a dive into my heart and ask you to do the same.

I had an ultra sound of my heart done last year and I saw and heard my own heart beating. Pretty amazing stuff. However, had I known what lay ahead today I’d have taken a closer look.

We know, intellectually, that memories and dreams and hopes and emotions are actually stored up here, in our heads...but we make a repository for them down here, in our hearts. There are countless songs and poems about the love, joy, pain and despair in our hearts. We eat our hearts out. We give purple hearts for bravery. We have heart to heart talks. Our hearts break, things are heartfelt. Some people are heartless. We love with all our heart and some hate with all their heart. And we all know that the stars at night are big

and bright (clap, clap, clap, clap) deep in the heart of Texas.

And there are hundred and hundreds of quotes that involve the heart.

1. THE HEART OF A MOTHER IS A DEEP ABYSS AT THE BOTTOM OF WHICH YOU WILL ALWAYS FIND FORGIVENESS.

(Honore de Balzac)

2. IN A FULL HEART THERE IS ROOM FOR EVERYTHING, IN AN EMPTY HEART THERE IS ROOM FOR NOTHING.

(Antonion Porchia)

3. ONLY TIME CAN HEAL YOUR BROKEN HEART...JUST AS ONLY TIME CAN HEAL HIS BROKEN ARMS AND LEGS.

(Miss Piggy)

Two Sundays ago, after I had finally got some kind of grip on this talk I was going to give, Bruce Bode, began his sermon with a poem called "The Heart's Seed. I went into shock. "He's doing my subject! He's doing my subject!" Of course, he wasn't but the poem is so beautiful and apt I'm going to read part of it again. The author, by the way, is unknown.

THERE WILL BE SOMETHING HERE,
SOME PART OF THIS LEFT OVER PAST OUR FINAL SOFT CARESS.
A BREEZE AT TWILIGHT, CARRYING A KISS.
THE FRAGRANCE OF A PETAELED LOVELINESS
THAT WE HAVE KNOWN SOME LITTLE SHINING EDGE OF...
ECSTASY ON A GOLDEN DART –
AND WE WILL STAND BESIDE THE JASMINE HEDGE AGAIN,
AND LOVE WILL SPRING FROM HEART TO HEART.
FOR MEMORY WILL KEEP WHAT IT HAS HEARD
FOREVER ETCHED UPON THE HEART'S OWN SEED,
AND TIME SHALL NOT ERASE ONE TENDER WORD
THAT LOVE HAS WRITTEN DOWN FOR FUTURE NEED.

And Bruce went on to say "the heart, the poem suggests, is like a storage bin, a great storehouse where seeds of memory are kept and stored." A conclusion I had reached too, although, as you'll see, my analogy is nowhere near as poetic.

So, to paraphrase Mr. Shakespeare, "let's go to our bosoms and ask our hearts what they doth know." You don't just look into your heart and right away see down in the deepest part. It's not unlike packing for a move. You have to sort through books and old papers and photographs before you box them up. There might be a book that you're going to donate to the book sale, but you decide to take a quick look so you open it and readfor an hour. Or the box of family photographs, you go through those one by one as

they conjure up their memories. Old newspaper articles you have to read again if only to find out why you kept them in the first place. And letters - some from people now gone, some from people you once loved. It does take a bit of time to travel down to the deepest part of your heart, let alone find what's in it.

It's an elevator ride, down past many floors and you stop and get off at some to look around.

THIRD FLOOR - DREAMS. FORGOTTEN & UNFULFILLED

Langston Hughes wrote that "Dreams that go unheeded do not dry up like raisin in the sun." If you find unfulfilled dreams in your heart, stir them up. Take a look in your heart and shine a light on them. They're still there waiting for you. Dreams may be forgotten but they're never gone.

Perhaps you were never able to pursue your dreams because money was tight and you had to go to work to help support your family. Maybe you married young and had a family early, so your dreams for yourself became dreams for someone else. Dreams for your children perhaps, but if so you had best be sure they're the same as theirs...lest they join your own forgotten and unfulfilled ones.

I found an old dream in my heart that I've had since I was about 10. I dreamed of being the person at the railway station who announced the trains. You know, "The train now standing at Platform 7, is the 6.45 for London, calling at Rugby, Crewe and Watford Junction". When I looked into my heart and found that one I amended it. My dream now is to announce the trains at the railway station by my 70th birthday next year.

When I was small I dreamed of having a three wheeler bike. I got roller skates instead and never did master them. But now, I'm grown up and I have a little electric car and I believe that fulfills my three wheeler bike dream so that dream has been moved to the "fulfilled dreams" floor.

The floor of forgotten and unfulfilled dreams didn't seem very crowded for me. At first I thought that was because my main, giant one, had come true...been fulfilled in a big way. Yet, that seemed too good to be true and since this was about the deepest part of your heart I knew had to take a closer look.

I was always in the school plays. I loved that. I dreamed of going to drama school and becoming an actress. I left school at 16 and in my family you went to work when you left school, to help support yourself.

I didn't pursue that dream.

When I was about 17 I wrote a short story that I sent off to a popular national weekly called "Reveille". They published it and paid me for it. I bought a cheap, portable, typewriter. For a while I dreamt I would be a writer. I was actually published twice again,

but sort of by accident so I don't count that. I didn't pursue that dream either.

So I looked a little deeper into my heart and while I actually do believe that we can make our dreams come true if we really, really want to and I've done that, I suspect I often don't I do things unless I can be sure I'll succeed. I smoked for thirty years and never once tried to stop until I was sure I'd succeed, which I did.

But I did say yes to Shari, and I'm here today so maybe I'm getting better about that.

SECOND FLOOR: MEMORIES

This is a nice floor to stop at, for the most part. Lots to look at. Fond memories, happy memories, bittersweet memories, childhood memories... I don't want to discount bad memories because most of us have some and sadly some have too many but I'm going to talk about my good ones.

Childhood memories naturally involved my family mostly. I loved my father very much and I know how much he loved me, but until I started on this exploration I hadn't realized how much joy he gave me. No just happy memories but joyous ones.

When I was a little girl, father would put me on this little seat he'd fixed to the crossbar on his bike and we'd go off together to gather dandelions. It was wartime and we raised rabbits for food and we would go out into the countryside to gather sacks of dandelions for them. Sitting on the crossbar of your Dad's bike as you rode around the countryside is joyful!

We had a piano which my Dad played with great enthusiasm. His rendering of The Poet & Peasant Overture shook the house. He had played the piano for silent movies as a young man and we stood around the piano as he made up stories for us and illustrated them with music. For some reason I've never fathomed they often involved cowboys. That's not just happy stuff. That's *joyous*.

I think the Cafeteria must have been on this floor too because I found happy aroma memories of my mother's apple dumplings and steak and kidney pies. And suddenly, there was the memory of the best Yorkshire pudding in the whole of England, that I ate at every Sunday lunch until I left home at 20.

I spent a long time on this floor, it had some heady stuff on it.

Memories of sitting in a recording Studio on Abbey Road in 1964, listening to Paul McCartney noodle around on the piano and wondering what these boys were going to do when their bubble burst.

How much I laughed most days I went to work and how sad I felt when I walked out of NBC the night we finished shooting the last Laugh-In and there was the Joke Wall standing in the rain.

If you ride this elevator looking for the deepest part of your heart remember which floor these memories are on...

FIRST FLOOR: PAIN & FEARS

Most likely we all have fears that we keep deep in our hearts and are unspoken....which, of course, makes them more fearful. I have a big fear in my heart. I'm afraid I'll live to be an old lady and be alone. I'm also afraid I'll be a very, very old lady and run out of money, to say nothing of being a very, very old lady who doesn't know where she is.

I found my old fear of the dark when my father would send me out for cigarettes during the blackout and I'd run like mad there and back in the pitch darkness, wondering if something would jump out and get me.

There was the fear that went along with being in the air raid shelter when we heard planes fly overhead - my brother Eddy said he could tell which ones were ours....so it seemed ours were always the ones flying over.

This was a hard floor to get off at. There's sorrow to be found as we go deeper into our hearts.

Nothing truly had happened to my until I was almost 52. Imagine that. Little stuff, but nothing really bad. But when it came, it came in spades. And as I got deeper into my heart I found again and looked again at the intense pain I felt at the sudden death of Jacqueline, my partner of fourteen years and the sudden death of my father just four months later. It's been years now but the sorrow lies deep in my heart, waiting to ambush me. And it does...sometimes.

I looked at my estrangement from my two brothers and owned that it's more painful than I usually acknowledge.

I tried to look honestly into my deep heart at the pain there. I probably didn't find it all.

What I did find was that the happy memories leaven the sad ones and so I'd go back up to the floor above and hang out with happy memories for a while.

Going down.

GROUND FLOOR:

When I got here, pretty deep down...I found people, lots of people who had enriched my life. People who have been grace notes in my life, often children, even though some of them crossed me path only briefly.

There is hidden treasure, deep in the heart.

I'm going to repeat the words of the Reading earlier today, words by Adrienne Rich.....

MY HEART IS MOVED BY ALL I CANNOT SAVE,
SO MUCH HAS BEEN DESTROYED
I MUST CAST MY LOT WITH THOSE WHO, AGE AFTER AGE,
PEVERSELY, WITH NO EXTRAORDINARY POWER,
RECONSTITUTE THE WORLD.

Deep in my heart I celebrate those good people who can and do continue to reconstitute the world. Those words resonate in my heart as know they do in the hearts of many of you in the Sanctuary today.

“What’s in the deepest part of your heart?” What’s in the deepest part of my heart? After all of this and much, much more I haven’t spoken of today, I’ve come to believe that we won’t know what’s in the deepest part of our heart until it beats it’s last beat... and we crack the code. If there is one.