

What three things would you say you always have in your refrigerator? Anyone? Carrots? Milk? Horse radish? I would say I always have orange juice, leftover pizza, and bottled water. (No horseradish for me, thanks.) Of course, there are the things that get pushed to back of the fridge, too... the stuff that starts to grow a little moldy. Maybe that's something we don't want to admit to having in our refrigerators. Maybe not, anyway. That's something probably in my refrigerator that's usually there anyway. I admit it. Something moldy and gross. Something that's well past its life-expectancy. When things start to get a little moldy, that's a pretty good indicator that it's time to do some spring-cleaning around the fridge. The things that get pushed to the back of the fridge, the stuff that becomes out of sight and out of mind, that's the stuff that will come back to haunt you six months later... or six years later, depending on how often you clean out your refrigerator. Eeeew! Old and moldy food isn't going to do the job of nourishing us. That stale lasagna from last spring, don't eat it. That leftover stew from early June, don't try it. That milk that's a month past its expiration date, don't drink it.

Our reading from Jeremiah this morning has to do with old and moldy and rotten food. It's not the stuff that gets pushed to the back of our refrigerators. It's the stuff that gets pushed to the back of our hearts – the stuff that might start to grow moldy in our hearts.

Jeremiah announces in our reading this morning a new covenant to be made, a new promise by God about to be made for God's people. It's not that the old covenant had totally outlived its life expectancy or anything like that. The old covenant simply had been forgotten about, pushed to the back of people's hearts. People had forgotten about the old covenant, letting it grow old and moldy. It was no longer nourishing God's people the way it was meant to nourish them. What was this old covenant? The old covenant was the way of the law – the Ten Commandments, food laws, sacrificial lambs. That sort of a thing. To be in a relationship with God, you needed to follow a certain set of rules. That's what some people thought anyway. People's hearts weren't in it, though. Jeremiah tells us that God's people had put their hearts into other things besides God. And that hurts God. You can almost hear the pain behind God's words here in our reading. "I was their husband. I *was* their husband." People had put their hearts into other gods, into their money, into their status. People had put their hearts into their possessions, into sinful relationships, into glorifying themselves. But, God longs to be married to his people. That's the language used here in our reading from Jeremiah, marital language. These people simply kept turning away, giving their hearts to other things outside of God.

It hurts God when his people give put their hearts into other things outside of God. The old covenant was God's gift to his people. It was out of God's love that he gave this old covenant to his people. It was food for the journey. It was out of his love that he gave this old covenant. But his people simply took the gift and pushed it to the back of the refrigerator, to the back of their hearts.

So what does God do about this moldy heart dilemma? Well, God likes to do things in a big way. Normally if there's something old and moldy in your refrigerator, you would just throw it out, right? Well, God would apparently much rather just throw out the entire refrigerator altogether and do something entirely new. And that's what he does with this new covenant, his new promise for all people. God makes a new covenant, one that lasts

and lasts. The life expectancy of this covenant simply goes on and on. Our reading says that God will put his law within us and write it onto our hearts. That's the stuff of Jesus right there. The love poured out from the cross is what's been written onto our hearts. That's the love that has no expiration date. It's the covenant marked with the cross and the body and blood of Christ himself. God gives his own heart to us in this new covenant. God's heart is Christ himself. God gives it his all, his entire heart to us. He doesn't hold anything back.

So, that begs the question – where are our hearts this morning? It hurts God when we push his love for us to the back of our hearts, letting it grow old and moldy and stale. He wants to be the first love in our lives. He wants our hearts, above anything and everything else. God wants our hearts so that our hearts won't become moldy and stale or old. He wants our hearts so that our lives might be filled with his love, filled with his joy. It's so easy to have our hearts filled with practically anything else – filled with worry, filled with guilt, filled with pride, with envy – any number of things. God has a new way of doing things, though. He has a new covenant for us. And this new covenant is written onto our hearts.

Can you think of a better place to give God your heart than during Sunday morning worship? God wants our hearts everyday. He wants our love everyday. Worship is that time specifically set aside for us to do that, to give to God what he desires the most – our hearts. Call it a marriage thing if that helps. It's a love thing. He gives us pours his heart out for us, his love out for us on the cross. We pour our love out for him, our hearts to him by worshiping him. So, we sing to him, we pray to him, we ask for his forgiveness from the depths of our hearts in worship. We worship him with every fiber of our hearts.

This is probably just me. You're probably way better at this than I am. But sometimes I get locked into thinking that worship is somehow about us. I sometimes get locked into wanting my favorite hymns and songs during worship. I get locked into the routine of worship because it can almost become second nature sometimes. I have to catch myself at that point. I have check to see where my heart is at that point. Is my heart preoccupied with God at that point? Or is my heart more preoccupied with myself? Worship is all about giving glory to God, pouring our hearts out to him, giving our love and praise to him. Worship probably isn't going to be too worshipful if our hearts aren't into it.

The truth is, God doesn't get hung up on our favorite hymns or songs. God doesn't get hung up on these types of things. God gets hung up on what's going on in our hearts. It's not about our favorite things. It's about God's favorite things. And God's favorite things are his people's hearts. And so we sing to him from the depths of our hearts. We pray to him from the depths of our hearts and souls. We listen to his voice speaking through scripture with our hearts totally invested into what God has to say to us. I'm guilty of thinking worship is about us. Worship is so much more about God, though. It's about this new covenant he has for us. He becomes food for us on the Journey in this New Covenant. There's no expiration date on our hearts and lives now because of what Christ has done for us, by giving his life for us – by giving himself for us as food and nourishment for the Journey. I love worship. I love it! I love it because it's that chance to give to God our hearts. And our hearts are in such safe hands when we do that. Great things happen in our hearts when we give our hearts to him. So, worship him from the depths of your heart. Sing and pray to him from the depths of your heart. Let's give it a try and see what happens. Three things always in our hearts? Jesus, Jesus, and more of Jesus. Amen.