

“Renewing Your Heart”

March 9th 2025 — Selby United Church – Scripture Psalms 51:6-17

By Glenda Hudgins

Let us Pray:

Lord, we thank You for Your grace and mercy. We confess the areas of our hearts that need renewal and we ask You to cleanse us, refresh us and make us new. Take away our hardened hearts and give us hearts that beat for You. May we walk in Your renewal, leaving the past behind and stepping into the fresh start You have for us. In Jesus name, Amen.

Spring is a time of renewal and fresh beginnings. The cold, harsh days of winter fade away and new life begins to emerge. For many of us, spring also means something else, spring cleaning – a time to declutter, sweep out the dust and refresh our homes.

Think about that one closet, attic or garage that has been neglected all year. Over time, it collects dust, clutter and things we no longer need. At first, we ignore it because we don't want to deal with the mess but eventually, we realize that if we want a fresh start, we have to face the clutter, throw out what doesn't belong and make room for something new.

The same is true for our hearts and minds. Over time, sin, guilt and bad habits can build up like spiritual clutter. Instead of dealing with them, we try to hide them, push them aside or pretend they aren't there; but just like a cluttered house doesn't clean itself, our hearts won't be renewed unless we confess our sins, repent and allow God to do his cleansing work.

Psalm 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me”.*

Spring reminds us that God is in the business of renewal, but we must be willing to admit the mess in our

lives. When we confess our sins and turn back to Him, He washes us clean and makes us new – just like spring brings fresh life after a long, cold winter.

How do we renew our hearts, through repentance, making room for the new things God wants to do in our lives.

You will recall the story of Jonah. God sent him to Nineveh to warn the people that they must change their ways, that God's judgment was coming. The people realized that they had sinned and they had to amend their ways. In response, the entire city fasted, prayed and repented. God saw their sincere hearts and spared them from destruction. God is merciful to those who truly repent, no matter their past.

In Luke 22:54-62 we are reminded that Peter denied Jesus three times out of fear but after Jesus' resurrection, Peter repented and was restored. Jesus reaffirmed Peter's calling saying, *“Feed my Sheep”*. Failure isn't final, God restores those who return to Him with a sincere heart and Peter went on to become a great leader in the early church.

These stories remind us that renewal begins with repentance. Whether through personal failure, rebellion or

spiritual wandering, God's mercy is always available when we return to Him.

The Bible speaks about the heart in many ways, describing it as the center of a person's thoughts, emotions and spiritual life. The Bible teaches that our hearts are central to our spiritual lives, influencing our thoughts, decisions and relationship with God.

Have you ever felt stuck? Like no matter how hard you try, there's a heaviness in your heart that you just can't shake? Maybe it's guilt from past mistakes, bitterness from old wounds, or even spiritual apathy that's crept in over time.

The truth is, life has a way of clouding our hearts, but here's the good news: God specializes in renewal. Psalm 51:10 *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me"*.

So, let's start with repentance. This happens when we recognize our need for God, and allow him to transform our hearts. Repentance is the doorway to a renewed relationship with God and the restoration of our spiritual vitality.

Look at First John 1: 8-9 *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep His promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrong doing"*.

But **we** have to acknowledge our sin and our need for God's grace. Imagine you are carrying a heavy burden, repentance is like setting that burden down and

letting God carry it for you. We can experience God's forgiveness and cleansing, removing that guilt and shame that weighed us down. Repentance allows God to transform our hearts, and replaces our stubbornness and sin with a renewed desire to love and obey Him.

Mathew 11:28 *"Come to me all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest"*. How great is that to surrender our worries, fears and struggles to God, in exchange for His peace and strength. Carrying a heavy load is exhausting, but when you hand it to someone stronger, you experience relief.

When it comes right down to it, renewal through repentance is not about earning God's forgiveness-its about receiving it. When we confess our sins and turn to Him, He meets us with grace, washes us clean and renews our hearts for His glory. What a wonderful gift of repentance and the fresh start it offers us in Christ.

The second step to renewal of the heart is through surrender. Give our lives to God, trust him to guide, transform and empower us. Surrender is an act of faith, letting go of control and allowing God to work in and through us. Surrender begins with recognizing that God is in control and that His ways are better than ours.

Mathew 16:24 – *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone wants to come with me, he must forgive himself, carry his cross and follow me"*. By surrendering it shifts our focus from selfish ambitions to living for God's glory which bring purpose

and fulfillment. Renewal through surrender is trusting God with every part of your life-your plans, our fears, your weaknesses and even your strengths. Let's commit to surrendering our lives to Him today and experience the renewal that only He can bring".

God's grace is the foundation for the renewal of our hearts, not through our own strength but through His power through Grace. God doesn't just forgive us-He transforms us. He replaces our old sinful identity with a new one rooted in Christ.

Psalm 51: 10-16 *"Create a pure heart in me, O God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me. Do not banish me from your presence; do not take your holy spirit away from me. Give me again the joy that comes from your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach sinners your commands, and they will turn back to you. Spare my life, O God and save me and I will gladly proclaim your righteousness. Help me to speak, Lord and I will praise you, You do not want sacrifices or I would offer them, you are not pleased with burnt offerings"*.

This passage is a heartfelt plea from David expressing his desire for spiritual renewal and restoration. David asks God to create in him a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit in him. David acknowledges his failures and recognizes that true worship is not about rituals or sacrifices but about a broken and contrite heart before God. This passage reminds us that God desires sincerity, repentance and a willing heart more than outward religious acts. It is a call to seek God's grace, knowing that He

delights in transforming and restoring those who come to Him with humility.

God is calling each of us to experience the power of a renewed heart. It begins with repentance-acknowledging our sin and turning away from it. It continues with surrender-yielding every part of our lives to His will which is made possible by His amazing grace which cleanses, empowers and transforms us. Renewal is not something we can achieve on our own but we must let go of the old and create something new Psalm 51:10 *'Create a new heart in me Oh God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me.'*

A renewed heart reflects God's love and forgiveness which enables us to extend the same to others.

As we have seen today, renewal begins with repentance, Just like spring brings new life after a long winter, God wants to bring renewal to our hearts – but we have to let Him do the work.

Imagine holding onto an old, withered plant. It's dry, lifeless and no longer growing, but instead of letting it go, you keep watering it, hoping it will somehow bloom again. That's what happens when we hold onto sin, bitterness or the past, we are trying to make something grow that God wants to replace with something new.

God is not in the business of patching up old hearts, He is in the business of giving us a brand new one. No matter how dry, broken or distant your heart feels, God is ready to renew you.