

“Open Hearts”

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It's easy to open a box of chocolates. It's easy to open our mouths to receive those chocolates. One would almost think we needed them for sustenance. Then again, maybe we do. The matter of opening our hearts is altogether different. It's easy and not easy to open our hearts. Why? Because once we do, we're vulnerable. Who knows what will fly in? Who knows who will capture them? Who knows how easily they will be broken? Who knows? What if? Then what? So why not continue as is? Many of us will feel a lot more secure with the doors of our hearts ajar. That way we can quickly slam them shut or open them a crack if we become curious. That way we'll be safe.

Of course if we want to be really safe, we'll lock up and hire a doorman, maybe even purchase a security system with a loud alarm. If anyone's lurking about, we'll be forewarned. Better safe than sorry. No surprises. No breaking and entering for my heart!

Ah, the price of safety, the cost of security! Yet many of us are seasoned practitioners of opening and closing the doors of our hearts, and more of us know well what it is to keep the door ajar. Why? Because an open heart is a trusting heart, and a trusting heart is open to betrayal. An open heart is a hopeful heart, and a hopeful heart is open to disappointment. An open heart is a faithful heart, and a faithful heart is open to faithlessness. An open heart is a heart that can be broken, and then what? Then what?

I wonder how many of us have been betrayed by someone we trusted, perhaps by one we had counted on to be our life partner or our business partner or even a son or daughter or mother or father. It hurts. It hurts a lot. So why not just shut that door, invest in that security system and be prepared, lest we're taken off guard and find ourselves once again yielding to the possibility of heartbreak? So our affections flow with less enthusiasm. So our moods grow an edge. So we find ourselves shutting out, closing down, and doing so with ample rationale. At least another thief won't break in and steal what is precious. At least we'll be consoled by those new friends: resentment, cynicism, and self-righteousness.

How many of us have known betrayal? How many of us have been downwind of unfairness, caprice, or injustice? On the other hand, how many of us have been purveyors of unfairness, injustice, or betrayal even? How many of us have been complicit in the suffering of another? Yet if it is **we** who are suffering, that is all we tend to acknowledge, as if our hearts have put out a “no vacancy” sign. What to do? What to do?

How is it that we might trust once again when our trust has been betrayed? How is it that we might love once again when our love life has crashed? How is it that a broken heart becomes whole?

For me, the alternative to not opening my heart again and again is a commitment to brokenness. The alternative to not ever trusting again is the false sanctuary of control. The alternative to not ever being vulnerable again is isolation. To open my heart again and again is to breathe, to breathe out the possibility of truth telling, to breathe in the possibility of

reconciliation, to breathe out the grace of forgiveness, to breathe in the possibility of possibility. To open my heart is to know yet another chance for wholeness, for joy, for turning a corner and knowing that I made it around that corner with my soul intact. To open our hearts again and again is to affirm that today and tomorrow and the next day hold chance after chance to be in loving and right relation both with those it is easy for us to love and with those it is hardest for us to love, with those we count as friends and with those we have discounted as enemies. As for healing a broken heart, an open heart is our only chance.

Let us open our hearts to one another. Let us open our hearts to our heart-broken world. Let us open our hearts and find our souls. Amen.