

Get yourself a new heart (Ezekiel 18:1-4; 25-32)

God is calling us out.

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It's time for a change. In the passage this week from the prophet Ezekiel, God is calling us out.

God is calling us out from behind our cardboard cutouts of what we have created as the image of our best self. God is not interested in titles, degrees, status, or whatever else we may be hiding behind in order to protect and project our image of righteousness. Nor does God seem particularly interested in our iniquities. Hiding our shame, self-doubt, and all of our failings is also not of interest to God. We may sort and assign worth: Righteous ones are good. Those with iniquity are bad. But God does not seem interested.

God seems to have other things in mind. According to Ezekiel, God is more interested in what we are going to do rather than what we have done. God is more interested in what we are going to do today and tomorrow than what was we might have done or left undone yesterday.

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But that is just the first move—what comes next is rather amazing, I think. Ezekiel tells us, don't just go about tinkering with your old ways to make them more appealing. Go out and get yourself new heart and a new spirit all together.

In a way this seems like the last thing we should be doing. There is such a hunger in our culture for the next bright and shiny new thing. In a world where forced obsolescence is such an effective marketing strategy, where landfills are bursting and plastic sea-islands are growing, we have to learn the patience of fixing things instead of replacing them.

Except, it turns out, when it comes to our spiritual lives. The word of the prophet tells us to cast it out, throw it out. Don't tinker; dump it all together. Start again, fresh! Get yourself a new heart and a new spirit.

This does not mean that it doesn't matter what we have done or what we have left undone. There is great wisdom in the Ignatian practice of the *Examen*, reviewing our days in the light of God's love, giving thanks for all that was and bringing into prayer whatever things, bad or good, have touched us deeply. There is wisdom in taking up practices that help us out of our hiding.

And then, Ezekiel tells us, God wants us to cast it away. Cast it away, so that when we awake the next day we will be ready: ready to ask God to give us a new heart and a new spirit, so that the same mind may be in us that was in Christ Jesus. When we do this we will finally be freed to stop being so caught up with what we are doing or not doing and to be caught up instead with what God is doing. And that is where it all begins.