

**“Internalize”** Sermon for March 18, 2018, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 51:6-12, John 12:20-26

Judges 16:28a-30 New International Version (NIV)

*28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, .... 29 Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, 30 Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus, he killed many more when he died than while he lived.*

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early 15c., "extending toward the interior," from Medieval Latin *internalis*, from Latin *internus* "within, inward, internal," "on the inside, inward."

If you internalize something such as a belief or a set of values, you make it become part of your attitude or way of thinking.

In Zora Neale Hurston’s epic novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Jamie Mae Crawford after two painful marriages, finds love with Teacake. With him she— “felt her soul crawl out of its hiding place.”

When the Greeks appeared seeking Jesus, experienced an internal, life-transforming moment,

which freed him with resolve for what was ahead for him. It was time for “the seed of life to fall and die.” His destiny as the new human being, the new Adam who was to die and be raised as a sign of God’s forgiveness, acceptance and unconditional love for humanity, was fully internalized by this event Gentiles.

His ministry as a Jew was complete, the Law of Moses would be fulfilled. The prophetic promises would become reality. Those Greeks searching for Jesus and finding him was God’s signal that love was about to be fully manifested, not only in his life, but also in his death.

This internalization of our deepest self is what we refer to as happening in the “soul.” As we learned last week, the soul can be discouraged, its spiritual life drained, or it can be spirited; it can return to its God-intended enthusiasm by facing life and life’s

challenges with courage and faith and resolve to move ahead with living.

**Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.**

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
**and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

The Psalmist celebrates God's planting faithfulness, giving us wisdom, even at the very moment of the conception of our lives. On the basis of this reality he prays, "renew a steadfast spirit within me." The word "steadfast" comes from old English, meaning to stand - firm, i.e., faithful, unshakable, unmovable.

The very first Psalm teaches us that internalizing a steadfast spirit is a process that begins with one:

(Psalm 1:2-3)

2 whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

This internalization of God is that which Jeremiah speaks of in his prophecy (31:22-24):

33 “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord.

During the season of Lent we seek to deeply internalize God. Sampson remembered that the Spirit of God had already been internalized with him. Although he had broken his vows as a Hebrew Nazirite, he would discover that it was not in the locks of his hair or his personal purity or piety in abstaining from things, but rather the power of God that made all the difference. Having sunk as low as life would allow and still breathe, Sampson called on the Lord. “Yah, please remember me, made me strong again, just one more time.” That was all the

prayer he needed to make, and he was empowered to defeat his enemies.

The outside circumstances may look bleak. You may not like what and who you see in the mirror. God from birth, God has given us life. If we call on him who is already internalized in our souls. We will again experience the peace, the power and the joy of God's life for us.

AMEN.