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## *Written on Your Heart*

**A sermon by Canon Wallace Marsh**  
**Proper 24 – Year C**

*I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.*

Writing has always been difficult for me. For starters, I am a southpaw, and growing up my teachers had a difficult time teaching me how to write. When I started learning cursive, I was sent me to a classroom where the teacher happened to be left-handed. I would sit in the corner of her classroom and practice writing. In between lessons, the teacher would come over to help a fellow left-hander learn to write.

Going off to college was another reminder that writing was a difficult process. When my first English paper came back, it didn't have a grade. I hurriedly flipped through the pages looking for a grade. Instead, on the very first page, just a few sentences into the paper was a red line with the words, "This was as far as I read." Thankfully, the professor wrote, "I will give you a grade at the end of the semester, but between now and then I am going to teach you to write." The class was difficult, the semester rigorous, but I became a better writer.

We all struggle at writing. Whether it is writing a paper, or writing a note to a loved one, or sitting at the computer to write an important email, writing can be difficult. Even gifted writers have their struggles.

Some of you know Episcopal priest Becca Stevens, who has been a guest speaker here at the Cathedral. What you might not know is that Becca's husband, Marcus Hummon, is a famous songwriter. I saw an interview where Marcus talked about song he wrote with some of his writing colleagues.

The song "Bless the Broken Road" was written in 1994, and was picked up by Rascal Flatts in 2005; it rose to the top of the charts and eventually won a Grammy. Marcus said when they finished writing the song they knew they had something special, but they couldn't imagine that it would take someone almost 10 years to discover it. It goes to show that even the inspired, gifted and professional writers experience frustration during the writing process.

The Lord tells Jeremiah that he is about to do a new thing for the people of God: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts..." What is it that God wants to write in their hearts? The Lord goes on to tell Jeremiah: "I will be there God and they will be my people...from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord."

Charles Spurgeon, known as the Prince of Preachers, said the essence of what is written on our heart can be summed up in one word, "Love." Love is the law that God puts into our heart and the only way to love the law is to fall in love with the law-giver, Jesus Christ, who pens those words onto our heart.

God has written on our hearts, and the question for us today is whether those words are being written into our lives? In other words, what is the narrative you are writing?

I don't need to remind you that we are just a few weeks away from a major election. You and I are very much aware of the fact that political narratives are being written. Like any good narrative, the candidates want us to see ourselves in their story, and to start believing that the story they are telling is our story.

There is anxiety around an election because we believe a new narrative will be written for our country. Some of us might even think a new narrative will be written in our lives. Others are so disgusted by the narratives they have lost hope.

Many years ago, theologian Stanley Hauerwas commented on this idea that we choose our own story. Hauerwas said the American project “is the attempt to produce a people who believe that *they should have no story except the story that they choose when they had no story.*” Hauerwas goes on to write: “The church does not believe that you should have no story except the story you choose when you had no story...Christians do not believe we get to choose our story, but rather we discover that God has called us to participate in a story not of our own making.”

So what does this mean for us?

In the words of Jeremiah, it means God has written onto our hearts and has written us into a story that is not our own. Believe it or not we actually pray something to this effect on Sunday morning, “Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.”

We have been given work to do (not chosen it), we have been given a work, given a call, given a mission, because we participate in a story not of our own making. We are a part of a larger story, and we have a responsibility to know that story, to teach that story, and to believe that we are a part of a holy narrative.

God wants the words written on our heart to be spoken into the story of our lives.

Let me conclude with a story Bob Benson once told a story about his son, Mike.

He said Mike wanted to take a drama class, and after 9 months of taking that class there was a speech recital.

*Mike had only three lines to say — nine months of speech, three short lines. And they came very late, in the last moment of the last act of the very last play. Anyway you looked at it, he was not the star. At least not to anyone except a couple about halfway back on the left side.*

*It was a long evening and it was miserably hot. But Mike waited and he was ready and he said his lines and he said them well. Not too soon, not too late, not too loud, not too soft, but just right, he said his lines.*

*I'm just a bit player, too, not a star in any way. But God gave me a line or so in the pageant of life, and when the curtain falls and the drama ends, and the stage is vacant at last, I don't ask for a critic's raves or fame in any amount. I only hope that he can say, “He said his lines. Not too soon, not too late, not too loud, not too soft. He said his lines and he said them well.”*

Remember that God has written in your heart. Remember you are a part of a larger narrative. So, say your lines and say them well. AMEN.