

Jeff's Jottings

Living our faith by heart

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Two brief thoughts on this Friday, both borrowed, offered at the end of a busy week and the beginning of a January weekend framed by the holiday that comes at its end and the cold we'll endure in getting there.

The first comes from 19th century British poet Christina Rossetti, most often sung at Christmas but perhaps more appropriately so on what may be the coldest weekend of the winter:

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

The second many of you may have heard recently, whether in church or, as I did, on your Facebook feed, but it bears repeating: the enduring post-Christmas poem of theologian, educator, and civil rights leader Howard Thurman:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,

when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

I grew up encouraged to learn the Bible “by heart.” To memorize it. Rosetti and Thurman up the stakes, by calling us to ***live*** our faith by heart. Good words.

Stay warm this weekend. Help others to do so. Live faithfully. Live by heart.