



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN!

Sundays during our Lenten journey we have been looking at covenants. Remember that covenants can be thought of as promises, contracts, or agreements between two parties or peoples. Well, this morning we have another covenant from the book of Jeremiah in our reading. This promise or covenant is a one-sided promise that God makes with the Israelites. God makes this covenant and God fulfills his covenant. The responsibility is totally on His shoulders.

Can you remember another covenant probably more famous than this one, that God made with a man named Noah? We talked about it the Sunday the Bishop was here. God made that covenant with Noah, that He would never again destroy all life, and all of creation with a flood. When Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives along with all the pairs of animals got on dry ground out of the ark, God made them a promise that never again would mankind be put through a flood that destroyed all life. God set a rainbow in the sky as a sure reminder of His everlasting, one-sided covenant between God and His people. This was a promise that God gave us, and He has kept that promise to date.

Today, as we look at the words of Jeremiah, we are going to discover another of God's covenants, a new and improved one. However, first God reminds the Israelites that they could not keep the covenant God had given them as they came out of slavery in Egypt. That was the promise on God's part to be their God if they would be His people. This old covenant was sadly broken over and over again by the people. They could not seem to follow the Ten simple Commandments given to them at Mt. Sinai and they worshiped other gods as well. God meant for the law to give them direction and guidance so all of His people could live in harmony. But what did they do? Yup, they sinned. That was a two-sided covenant, and the Israelites could not keep up their end of the deal. They grumbled against God and did not follow his commands.

And now we have Jeremiah, a prophet of God, who spoke God's messages to the nation of Israel as they were captives in Babylon. Because of the Israelites continual disobedience, they were enduring the Lord's drastic discipline. In verse 31 they are told to look forward to a new covenant that God will make with them. Jeremiah is going to help the people focus on the good that is yet to

come. They would be reunited again, both the northern kingdom, Israel and the southern kingdom, Judah would go forward together as God's chosen children, the Israelites.

This covenant that God has suggested is different from the old covenant. The good Lord knew that the Israelites were not good at keeping their end of the covenants and so God goes to them through Jeremiah and makes a promise, a covenant that He alone will keep. And it is a many faceted promise. First, God said that He will put his law in their hearts. Then God tells them that He will be their God and they will be his peoples no matter what. All will know God and their sins will be forgiven as God will remember them no more. That is an awesome deal, folks. Seems here that we need to do nothing to reap these rewards. This is truly a one-sided covenant. How can God be so good to us? How can he love us sinners so much that He makes such a promise? Aren't you the least bit curious?

I believe that many people were curious about this man who came to fulfil all the covenants. That man was Jesus. In our John reading this morning we hear the Greeks ask Philip, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." So even the small group of Jews from Greece at the Passover festival, want to see. Why do you suppose that is??? Well, I think that the answer is twofold.

First of all, I think that they were simply curious. They had heard about Jesus and wanted to see this man, face to face. Who was this incredible man who calmed the storm, walked on water, healed the sick, and brought the dead back to life? Who was this courageous man who set Torah law on its ear and turned water into wine. Who wouldn't be curious? And as we all know, curiosity can be a good thing as it can make us look more closely at something that is hard to believe. But we also know that it was curiosity that often killed the cat, as we try to solve the mysteries of life.

And folks we are curious beings? Why did you first come to Christ the Servant? You probably wanted to see for yourself what the people here were like, or maybe you wanted to know more about God and Jesus or what the church stands for and whether you might fit in our congregation. We are still today a curious lot.

The other reason that they want to see Jesus is because He is bigger than life? Like many of our heroes, Jesus taught with authority. He did things normal humans could not do. He broke the rules of Jewish law. He ate with sinners and deferred to no one, not even Herod. He touched lepers, walked among Gentiles, had compassion for the poor, and showed no contempt for the wealthy. Jesus talked against the religious leaders yet held small children softly in his arms. All they had heard was that this man was somehow bigger than anyone they had ever met before.

Can you think of a better role model than Jesus? I bet not. He lived his life as God and man together. Jesus was the only perfect human in every way and God all wrapped in one. So, who would not want to meet him? I know that I would! Actually, I have a whole list of questions for him when I see him face-to-face in heaven someday.

In our text we then hear that, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." WOW We are to glorify by following Jesus, losing our life but gaining a life serving only Him. Our call to servanthood in Jesus name is written all over the New Testament, prophesied by the prophets of Old. Those prophets told us that a king was coming, one who would be our savior. So, who would not want to see this Jesus, so that he takes our curiosity and our admiration and elevates them to something more significant and transforming. And this is truly the Good News of the Gospel. And I

am here today to tell you that we will all see Jesus, but not as an object of curiosity and not as a hero, but as the Savior of the world. Jesus will be high and lifted up on a cross for all to see.

This means that Jesus is not simply to look at as a historical figure, impressive as he might be, but to behold the Christ as one crucified for the sins of the world in order to offer us salvation when we call upon his name. Jesus is the signpost if you will, that points to God and to a life of surrender in love and service to others. Jesus is our promise of deliverance from sin and death, the one who ushers in the New Creation calling us to a life of faithfulness and obedience to God. "Those who love their life will lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Verse 25

Jesus is the way, as he showed us how to surrender our lives to God, trusting that He would deliver on the promise to always be our God and love us forever. Jesus is the total fulfillment of all the promises God has made to the Israelites and to us. As our text tells us we are to glorify the Lord God almighty for what he has done for us. It was Jesus' time come true. And it is still true today. Jesus is the Messiah. To see him then or now, is to see him crucified for the sins of the world and in response, we lay down our lives for the sake of others.

Figuratively speaking, every time we gather at the Lord's table we participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We remember how his body was broken and his blood shed for the forgiveness of sins, and we take the bread and drink the cup of the new covenant of which Jesus speaks. Being renewed in faith through our eating and drinking of His body and blood, we go out, by God's grace to be the body of Jesus in the world today. God's love and truth are drawn into our hearts at the eating and drinking of this special meal, so we can leave here strengthened to share God's love with all the people of the world who so very much need to hear this covenant, this promise.

So come to the Lord's table this morning to receive these gifts of the New covenant from a God who wants so much to be your God and who loves you without end. **AMEN**