

Maundy Thursday C 2022 Jer 31:31-24, Luke 22:7-20 “The New Covenant”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our text tonight, Jeremiah prophecies about **a new covenant**. But like everything else that Jeremiah prophesied, the people didn't much care.

They had more important things to do, more important things to worry about, more important things to give their attention to than this crazy prophet who never had anything good to say to them but kept telling them to repent and return to the Lord.

They were a people of God turned worldly, with their own prophets telling them what they wanted to hear, and so they ended up *using* God instead of worshiping Him.

This is what God means when He says **they broke His covenant**. It wasn't just that they broke a few rules— it was that while He was to them a faithful husband, providing for them and taking care of them, they were adulterous and unfaithful.

They turned their back to Him. They took His Word and threw it back in His face. And so, actually, they didn't just break His covenant; ***they smashed it to smithereens!***

And so God would give His idolatrous bride to the false gods she'd prostituted herself with. God had given his bride free will; He would not force her to stay with Him.

He withdrew His husbandly protection and allowed the armies of the nations to conquer Israel and take most of its inhabitants into exile. It's as if God said, if it's other gods they want, then other gods they shall have.

But God took no delight in this. No gloating, no ***“I told you so!”*** In fact, even before it happened, God planned to bring back His bride. He **would not** abandon her forever!

For though He withdrew His protection, He could *never* withdraw His love.

No, ***a new covenant*** I will make, God says. Not like the old one. I will not just ***give them my Word; I will put it in them.***

I will **renew my vows** to them and they to me: **I will** be their God, and **they will** be my people. And last (but not least): **I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.**

And though God's people ignored these words when Jeremiah first spoke them, how precious they'd later become!

For what unfaithful husband or wife, returning to their spouse, would *not* want to hear those words: ***I forgive you. And not only do I forgive you, I will never bring it up again!***

Well, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, **tonight, those words are spoken to you!**

They are spoken to you who (like the people in Jeremiah's time) think you have more important things to worry about, more important things to do, more important things to give your attention to than your God and His Word.

To you who have sinned in thought, word, desire, and deed. To you who have been unfaithful and sought your life, pleasure, and good in the things of this world.

Repent and return. For tonight, your God comes for you and says: *I forgive you.*

For tonight is the night of Jeremiah's **new covenant**. This is the Passover that Jesus desired to eat with His disciples. This is that Passover that would change all Passovers.

Tonight, the bridegroom is preparing to lay down His life for you, His bride, that death *pass over* you and descend upon Him.

Tonight, is the night when *He* will be exiled, and *you* brought home; when *He* will be broken, that *you* may be made whole; when *He* will be condemned so that *you* will be forgiven.

Tonight, is the night when Jesus not only gives you His Word **but puts it in you.**

Before He lays down His body and blood on the cross, He lays it on the Table for His disciples to eat and drink. **This is My body. This is My blood.**

The Word made flesh put in us, that we may live in Him. And be again one flesh. All your sins are forgiven and forgotten. Tonight, is the night.

And while our Lord promises to forgive and forget, He calls on us to *remember*. Not our sin, but all that He has done for us. ***His faithfulness. Do this in remembrance of Me.***

To remember the grace of God that is uncaused, unasked-for, unprecedented, and unlimited. ***To remember*** the grace of God coming down from Heaven and being born a man.

To remember the grace of God in finding the lost sinner, welcoming the outcast, healing the blind, the deaf, the leper and the lame, raising the dead, and having compassion for all.

And to remember that all of this is for you and me.

To remember the grace of God in that what I did not deserve, God provided. What I did not ask for, God gave. When I did not seek, God came.

To remember that God did not abandon us. Rather, He came for us, and renewed His vows: **I will be your God, and you shall be my people.**

Not just for a time, but forever. Take, eat. Take drink. This is the new covenant for you.

Tonight, that new covenant in His blood is here for us. Indeed, it is here for us every Sunday. For we need the strength it offers.

The siren song of Satan and sin is strong, but the love of our Savior is even stronger. Calling us back. Forgiving our sin, our rebellion, our unfaithfulness.

And never bringing them up again.

And so tonight our Lord goes as it is written of Him.

It is the night on which He was betrayed – handed over to sinful men.

But remember, He *wanted* that, for that was the plan all along. He handed Himself over to sinful men and women, as a sacrificial atonement for their sin, so that he would **forgive our iniquities and remember our sins no more.**

How precious are those words! Promised through the prophet Jeremiah some 600 years before Jesus came.

Delivered tonight at this altar. What more can we say but thank you, Jesus. Amen