

Sunday, August 14 2022 Pentecost 10 ***“Covenants and Commitments”***

Jeremiah 31:31-34 | Corinthians 11:23-26, Matthew 12:9-21

We continue in our Summer Worship Series of “At Your Request” with our topic for today being “Covenants and Commitments.” We have heard about covenants and we know something about commitment but what is it that these promises or agreements reveal about who we are and what we believe and just where does God fit in? Do the covenants that God entered throughout Biblical history impact us today? Just what does the New Covenant call us to do and be as Christ leads us into the future of church?

As we begin we need to clarify how we define what is meant by covenants? When two people marry we often realize that a marriage license is signed by both people. Yet when we speak of a covenant of marriage, God is also a part of this. This is especially true if the couple states in their vows or promised, “In the presence of God and before these witnesses, I... “ It is a promise made in love and signed into place through a license. What about other covenants? Is there a contract involved or is it something that has more than what might be written out? Or are these ‘agreements’ just understood like the former ‘gentleman’s agreements’?

When learning about covenant theology, that this the role of God in historical covenants made with specific individuals, we must note that there are different kinds of covenants: conditional and unconditional. A conditional covenant for example is when God told Adam and Eve that they were blessed in the Garden of Eden. But if they disobeyed Him they would die. Because they sinned, they had to leave Eden and face the consequences of their sin, a spiritual and then physical death. If they had only obeyed God!

Another conditional covenant is the one God made between himself and Moses. Found in Exodus 20:1 - 31:18, this covenant contains the commandments that God gave to the Israelites in order to live according to God's will and for governing the people. God also promised a Messiah who would come and save His people. This covenant ended when Jesus died for the sins of all and ushered in the New Covenant.

Just how are these covenants viewed today? They are promises within an agreement or even general contract for the performance or non performance of a particular act. So when we think of the unconditional covenants of God, we must remember God's covenant with Noah. As a sign of this covenant, a rainbow would appear in the sky as a reminder that God promised He would never again destroy the Earth by flood. With Abraham, God entered a covenant stating that Abraham would be the father of many nations as numerous as the stars in the sky. Within the covenant of David, it was God's unconditional promise to David that he would have an eternal dynasty. This covenant was described by the prophets, Samuel, Jeremiah and Daniel. In this covenant with David, there are three major components: an everlasting throne, an everlasting King (Jer 32:21) and an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:14). This covenant was fulfilled because we trace Jesus' lineage back to David.

These are the covenants God entered into with people—Adam, Noah Abraham, Moses and David. But there are also those covenants which reflect the New Covenant Jesus stated as He lifted up the Cup during the Last Supper. This New Covenant is mentioned in the Old Testament in Jeremiah 31 and refers to God's promise that there will a future messianic time. It is an unconditional covenant which states "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest..".

As Christ followers, we are to know God's law and to be God's people means to live out the promises of one who has made promises of faithful service. This means living out the commitment made when you were baptised or when you took on the promises made by your parents at your baptism. At the time of confirmation or reaffirmation of faith, you renewed your commitment and you made statements of faith stating your belief in God- Father Son and Spirit. Through those words a commitment was made in response to the covenant of God.

This commitment is now up to you to fulfill. You have said you are going to do something and you promise that you will do it, now it is time to live out your faith, knowing that God's unconditional covenant of grace is abundant and people of faith who believe in God,

receive his grace through Jesus Christ. God's grace is the gift of life and hope. It is through Jesus the mediator of a better covenant between God and people that the New Covenant is established.

The New Covenant is the promise that God makes with people in that He will forgive sin and restore communion with those whose hearts believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant, and His death on the cross is the basis of the promise. He defeated death by His resurrection and restored life for those who believe in Him.

This new Covenant is presented and known in what the Christian church calls the sacrament of Holy Communion. When Jesus took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my name. As often as you drink it, do it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. This New Covenant is unconditional because Jesus is the mediator between God and believers. Through this New Covenant God fulfilled his part of the relationship he wants with people.

It is up to us to commit or recommit ourselves to serving him in faith. This means worshiping God as the body of Christ and it means living out our faith by serving others and making the life and work of the church a priority.

The Biblical covenants in history led God to send his Son Jesus to be the mediator between the Father and all of God's people. But, what often has occurred is that the people do not know God nor His Son Jesus or do so in a limited way. For when asked, people will respond, Jesus preached and taught and healed and died. But many are unsure as to why Jesus came to live on earth. The reason is simply this. God wanted to be in relationship with those whom he created. Yet people turned away. Throughout history God entered into covenants of faith and founded on love and trust. But the people sought more in this life, even though God offers us the gift of eternal life beyond this life on earth.

Our commitment to Christ Jesus came at different times in our lives but each time we share in the sacraments—at baptism, we feel again the waters of new life and in celebrating communion like we will share in a few minutes we must be reminded that God's Spirit is present. When we eat and drink the bread and juice, we are reminded that the New Covenant

has been renewed again as we remember Jesus' death and his resurrection. It is through Jesus' resurrection that we can renew faith and have hope.

Covenants, Commitments and Communion, - they go together but what is key is our faith in God—because God loved us so much he sent us Jesus. Are we ready to eat and drink and renew our faith in the New Covenant? This means committing ourselves anew to the sharing of Christ Jesus and his love for all people and being willing to invite others to do the same.

Let us rejoice as we pray together:

God of covenants and commitments, your grace is a blessing to us all. Help us in these moments of silence to renew our faith in you and to know again in our hearts that you are God and we are your people. Hear us O God as we put our faith and trust in you. In this moment and always. Amen.