

Maundy Thursday  
“The New Covenant of Blood”  
(Mark 14:23-24)  
March 24, 2024  
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Maundy Thursday is from our Gospel reading, Mark 14:23-24.

**“23 Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.**

So far the text...

Covenant. What is a covenant? We don't use that word very often. It's a commitment of one party to another or of two parties to each other which is legally binding by virtue of an oath. In other words, it's an oath-bound connection or a bond or guarantee or warranty. A covenant between two men in Scripture is usually the result of a mutual agreement to terms.

God's covenants with man, however, are totally unilateral in origin. Man cannot bargain for better terms. He can at most accept them or reject them. So, Moses said to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 4:13 what God declared.

**“13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. 14 And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.”**

Did the Israelites keep the covenant or did they fail? 40 years wandering in the desert tells us how badly they failed. And so also our 40 days of Lent remind us how we too have not kept the covenant of the Law.

Listen to a portion from Deuteronomy 32, how God cared for Israel but Israel rejected Him.

**13 “He made him ride in the heights of the earth,  
That he might eat the produce of the fields;  
He made him draw honey from the rock,  
And oil from the flinty rock;  
14 Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock,**

**With fat of lambs;  
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,  
With the choicest wheat;  
And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes.**

**15 “But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;  
You grew fat, you grew thick,  
You are obese!  
Then he forsook God who made him,  
And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.  
16 They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods;  
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.  
17 They sacrificed to demons, not to God,  
To gods they did not know,  
To new gods, new arrivals  
That your fathers did not fear.  
18 Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful,  
And have forgotten the God who fathered you.**

**19 “And when the Lord saw it, He spurned them,  
Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.**

God kept His side of the covenant, but Israel did not. As glorious as the law is, it is a ministry of death as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3.

**“7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.”**

And we too can find no solace or comfort in this covenant of the law, for we have also not kept it perfectly and deserve condemnation. But, God in His gracious love desired not to condemn us, but save us. But how? Through the ministry of the Spirit! Through the promise that God gave already in the garden of Eden. The promise of His Seed – Jesus.

**“15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it**

**should make the promise of no effect. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” Galatians 3:15-18**

Through His Son, God committed Himself to becoming the Seed of the Woman, suffering the punishment due man for breaking His law, and so crushing the Serpent’s head, which is to say, destroying the power of Satan over man. This Gospel promise of God formed the basis of His relationship with the church of the Old Testament, spoken to Adam and Eve, to Noah, to Abraham and now to us!

It is the promise that He speaks of in Jeremiah 31.

**“31 “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

*“The true spiritual house of Israel, the congregation of believers as it was found in the midst of God’s people at all times, received this promise as the covenant of the Lord in their interest. Three points stand out in this covenant which the Lord published among His people at the time of the Gospel proclamation. “It is inward or spiritual; it is individual and therefore universal; it is gracious and provides forgiveness.” He wanted to give this new commandment, the Gospel-message, into their mind, so that they would be sure to understand it; He wanted to write it upon their heart, so that they would be sure to keep it in loving memory.” Kretzmann*

And that is why we are again gathered here tonight at peace with God! For there is a new covenant for us who are part of the spiritual house of Israel through faith in Jesus! And this new covenant is based not on our imperfect works, but on the perfect sinless work of Jesus – the promised Seed.

**“19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.” (Galatians 3:19)**

We needed a Mediator. We couldn’t stand before God on the basis of the law. But Jesus could! And that is why we give thanks to God for Holy week. For God’s church, God’s people, His

holy Christian Church, is holy through the shed blood of Jesus. That is why tomorrow is a Good Friday. For the Seed mediated a new covenant on the cross for all people!

Paul continues in Galatians to show how glorious this new covenant is.

**“21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”**

This covenant that God has made is a personal covenant to you. He declares you justified in Christ. He remembers your sin no longer. And His oath is confirmed by the shedding of blood.

**“13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”**

God’s personal promise to you who have been justified by faith in Jesus is that you have an eternal inheritance! The new covenant keeps getting better and better! It’s by grace! It’s God’s oath and guarantee to you of forgiveness and eternal life. And He even gives you this promise not just through His Word but also through a most marvelous means that we celebrate tonight!

For before Jesus went to the cross, He established His new testament of His blood in this gift to His church of the Lord’s supper. God’s new testament, His new covenant, you personally receive tonight as you eat and drink the very body and blood that Jesus sacrificed for your redemption. And He personally says to you:

**“27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”**

The old covenant prepares us for the new covenant. The law, which only condemns, humbles us and brings us to repentance so that God can lift us up with the new covenant – the gracious work of Jesus – the Gospel! It is put into your mind, written in your hearts, and given to you most gloriously, as His parting gift of this sacrament of the altar, before He went to the cross. It is given to us to use often as our Lord says for we sin often and can never free ourselves from

the law. Thanks be to God that Jesus did! Eat and drink His body and blood and know that He did this for you!

Amen

**“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**