

Worship Service for February 21st: 1st Sunday in Lent – Communion Sunday

- **Old Testament:** Genesis 9:8-17
- **New Testament:** Mark 1:9-15
- **Psalms:** Psalm 25:1-10

Announcements:

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.
- Bible study will resume on March 3rd. Time: 7pm; Place: St. David's. We will be studying James 1.

Sermon: God's Covenant

Our passage in Genesis begins with God establishing a covenant with Noah and his sons. It is interesting to see that God included animals in this covenant. So, for those of us who have animals, let us remember that God cares for them too; He created them.

Why was God making this covenant? The people on the earth had been living very sinful lives and God had asked Noah to build an ark because He was going to cause a flood on the earth. This flood destroyed the whole earth and only Noah and his family and the livestock that was with him in the ark survived. After the flood, God in His compassion decided to make a covenant with Noah, his family and all the livestock never to destroy the earth with water again.

When we come to the New Testament Jesus is being baptized in water by John. And when he comes out of the water, God makes a covenant declaration to Jesus, "you are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." In this moment, God was establishing His covenant with His Son that He sent to come and rescue the world.

We see two covenants made by God to different people in different instances. But what is a covenant and how can it be defined? A covenant is an exclusive relationship in which two parties make a binding promise, an irrevocable promise to each other. A covenant is a relationship that is distinct from a contract. A covenant is a chosen or elected relationship which comes with defined responsibilities. It includes binding promises and obligations for the two parties involved in the covenant.

In the ancient world, not all covenants were alike. Some covenants were made between one who had more authority and someone who had less authority. Others were made between equals and others were between a Superior being and an inferior one as in the case between God and Noah, and God and Jesus. However, no matter the kind of covenant that was made, it was mostly respected and honored and there were consequences that came with breaking these covenants. Covenants were used in the ancient times to settle disputes between individuals and nations and as legal treaties between kings and their subjects.

In our passages today, God's covenants have to do with water. In the first instance, water represented chaos and destruction but in the second instance it symbolizes new life. Baptism is a covenant of new life in God through Jesus Christ. We might not hear it, but when we were baptized and every time someone is baptized, God makes the covenant declaration that, "you are my son/daughter, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. And our baptism is us accepting to be a party to God's covenant of new life. Our part of the covenant is accepting to be fully committed to the worship and the service of God. It is a display of our acceptance of the promises and obligations that come with this covenant.

The question we should be asking ourselves today is if we are keeping our share of the promises and obligations that we made to God through this covenant or not. For some of us we are still keeping our share of the covenant and for others we are feeling exhausted physically and spiritually and others feel like they are completely out of the covenant.

There is hope for each of us today. The communion of the flesh and the blood of Jesus is another covenant which does not only represent God's mercy and the forgiveness of our sins. It also renews our faith in the promises of God, it symbolizes a physical sign of God's promises and the fruits that result from this covenant.

God is inviting us through the communion table to respond to His covenant today by faith. He is calling on us to exercise a firm trust that Christ died on the cross for our sins. And that Jesus the Son of God, stands in our place bearing all our sins and shortcomings on his shoulders. And that he has reconciled us to God the Father.

As we approach the table this morning, let us tell ourselves these words from Martin Luther. "Though I am a sinner and have fallen, though this or that misfortune has befallen me, nevertheless I will go to the sacrament to receive a

sign from God that I have on my side Christ's righteousness, life, and sufferings, with all holy angels and the blessed in heaven and all pious men on earth.

May the communion table be for us today a table for the covenant of renewal and strength to go on with God's assignment and call to serve in His house and His kingdom. May it also awaken and increase our faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Amen.

Prayer

As we enter into this holy season, Lord God, we give you thanks for your promise of new life that sustains us, especially as these months of pandemic stretch on.

We thank you: For tiny signs of hope, even in a bleak landscape or on challenging day; For glimpses of beauty in a smile or a ray of sunshine; For scientific achievements that ease suffering in this time of pandemic; For the people who support and serve others in times of weakness or loss; For the chance to recover from mistakes, to begin again. Lord of all lives, sustain us with your presence and give us patience and perseverance as we await the future with you.

Trusting your promise of new life, it is with hope that we pray: For anyone we have hurt by harsh words or careless deeds; For those known to us who are carrying heavy burdens; For those we work with; For all who are seeking employment or worry about their businesses; For teachers, students and school administrators managing so many challenges this year; For troubled places in our world and those who work for reconciliation and understanding; For our congregation and all churches seeking new ways to minister in these months of distancing from each other; For ourselves and those lives closely connected to ours; Renew our health and hope for the future you will bring us through the courage and compassion of Christ our Lord, as we pray together the words he taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.