

THE COVENANT CONTINUES

Genesis 17:3-9

Wednesday, March 21, 2018, 31st Day of Lent

As I read the Genesis scripture for this meditation, two things jumped out at me. The first is the covenant God makes with Abram. There are many references to covenants throughout the Bible. Webster defines a “covenant” as a usually formal, solemn and binding agreement. In this passage, God promises Abram that he would become father of many nations. Abram had to agree that he and all his male descendants would be circumcised. Scripture tell us that both parties kept the covenant and all promises were fulfilled. In honor of the special occasion, Abram was given the new name of Abraham. This was the second thing that caught my attention. The new name signaled a new beginning.

A covenant with God is not just some historical thing we read about in the Bible. Hear these words contained in our Communion liturgy:

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new **covenant** by water and the spirit

We need to understand our own baptismal covenant in light of Jesus’ baptism. At Jesus’ baptism, God said: “This is my son.” While Jesus’ relation to God is unique, our Christian baptism means that God has also chosen us as daughters and sons, and knows us intimately as a parent. Our new name is “Beloved child of God, precious and beautiful to behold.”

Through our “new” covenant, God has promised grace. We do not have to spend our time figuring out how to earn salvation and eternal life. We just have to accept this new thing God is doing and this new direction he wants to point our life in, to accept our status as his children.

It’s time to stop playing “Let’s Make a Deal.” If you are old enough to remember this old game show, you will recall that a contestant would be given many opportunities to trade something for another unknown item. If you were lucky, you might better yourself; if not, you might wind up with a donkey or a lifetime supply of vinegar tablets. You had no trust that the show emcee had your best interests at heart. I have always heard that if something sounds too good to be true, then avoid it because it is bad. God’s covenant is the exception to that rule. The love and grace that God promises does sound too good to be true; however, God’s love for us expressed through his son Jesus Christ is one deal we do not want to pass up. God is not in the deal making business. His covenant has always been, and will always be, binding. There is no need for further deals. We cannot do better. My pastor has said on numerous occasions that God sent Jesus not to change God’s mind about us, but to change our minds about God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live into my baptismal name and to be mindful of your everlasting covenant.

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