

March 18, 2018 5th Sunday of Lent YearB

Renew in me a firm spirit, O Lord!

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalms 51:3-4, 12-15

Hebrews 5:7-9

John 12:20-33

Jeremiah speaks of the New Covenant that will place God's Laws within the hearts of the people. The Lord will be their God and the Israelites will be God's people. All will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest and the sins of the people will be forgiven.

The Psalmist pleads for mercy and asks God to wipe out all his offenses, and that he be freed from all guilt. He seeks a clean heart and renewal to a steadfast and willing spirit that will be sustaining in difficult times.

When Jesus lived in the flesh he offered prayers and supplications and was heard by the Father because of his reverence. The Son learned obedience from his suffering and when he was perfected he became the source of salvation for all who obey him. He is designated as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus explains to the disciples that the time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. When the grain of wheat dies it produces much fruit and so Jesus is willing to die for us. If we serve Jesus and follow him, the Father will honor us.



**Thank you, Father, for bringing to us the New Covenant,
Thank you, Jesus, for sealing it with your blood on the cross,
Thank you, Holy Spirit, for guiding us in its ways.**

Jeremiah's words envision the New Covenant being written upon the hearts of the people. The covenant is not new because of the partners but because it is God's desire to deeply love and to save the Israelites. Others will not be needed to teach them God's ways. Rather, they will come to know God from their own life experiences and will be naturally more responsive. Similarly, the Psalmist seeks the kind of relationship with God that Jeremiah describes. Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143 are known as the Penitential Psalms or Psalms of Confession although the name was originally given only to Psalm 51. Set aside a quiet evening this Lent and pray these psalms.

The New Covenant

A startling opportunity for conversion is indicated by Jeremiah's great oracle of the "New Covenant", sometimes called the "the Gospel before the Gospel," which marks a new beginning in divine-human relationships:

..I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen to know the Lord. All, from the least to the greatest, shall know me.

This passage is considered a landmark in Old Testament theology and is Jeremiah's most uplifting teaching. It is astonishing in that knowledge of the divine will is to be placed within the consciences of all the faithful. Even the understanding given to the "least" is to be on par with what is given to the elite and educated.

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