

Week 5 (Sept. 5-11)

The New and Definitive Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Commentary:

Israel had a lacklustre history when it came to keeping the covenant. It wasn't all bad, but it was still pretty bad! Verse 32 gives us an insight into the covenant relationship that was in God's mind: it was like marriage. He regarded Israel as his bride, though as things turned out he was often the jilted husband.

People today (including Christians) are often no better than the Israelites in keeping promises. Edwin Louis Cole writes: “I remember from my youth when the character of men was much stronger and richer in integrity than it seems to be now. When a man gave you his word and shook your hand as the seal, it was better than a signed contract. Often no contract was necessary – a man's word was his bond. In giving his word, a man made a covenant, and the handshake was a sign of that covenant.” (*Strong Men in Tough Times*, pp. 96-97)

This goes to show that faithfulness to one's promises – especially in keeping a covenant with God – is not simply a matter of human decision. God himself has to enable a person *from within*. Hence, through Jeremiah he promised a “new covenant” which would be founded on a new law written in the hearts of men. In other words, it would entail cardiac surgery of a spiritual kind: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

It is only when our hearts are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:3) that we can find the capacity to be truly a **People of the Covenant**.

What would such a people be noted for? “They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest” (verse 34). “Knowing” the Lord this way is not simply intellectual or cerebral; it would be personal, relational, and intimate.

For Reflection:

1. The “new covenant” which God promised through Jeremiah was enacted by our Lord Jesus in his very person, since he is the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Timothy 2:5). “But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). Begin by thanking God for giving us his Son. (Personalize and concretize your thanksgiving: What has Jesus done for you?)
2. By giving us his own Spirit, God has also already performed the necessary “cardiac surgery” on us. Now thank and praise God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Again, personalize and concretize your thanksgiving: How have you experienced being changed and transformed by the Spirit?)
3. Do a *lectio divina* on this passage.

Scripture-Prayer:

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” (*Ephesians* 1:15-17)

Intercession:

Let's pray for all those we are serving in all of *Ligaya's* outreaches (CYA, Lingkod, Tahanan, Pathways, outreaches to the PNP, to married couples, and so forth): That more people might come to “know the Lord” in a deeper way, and that we might provide formation and care for those the Lord brings to us.