

November 22

Jeremiah 36: 1-8, 21-23 27-28 31: 31-31

Children's Message:

This morning's message is about covenants. Which are basically an agreement and a set of rules for being in a relationship with someone. This morning It is about being in a relationship with God. I thought it might be better to talk about our relationships and the rules we have and their importance.

The good thing about rules is that they set boundaries. They tell us what we can and cannot do before we get into trouble. So know your boundaries. Rules also offer some comfort because you know people are supposed to follow them. It offers a bit of security. Rules also set out what your responsibilities are. What you are expected to do. This helps you to get to know yourself better and to grow up in a healthy way. To grow into being a good citizen and Christian.

A society without rules is insane. Everyone lives in fear and nothing would get done. The structure of society would fall apart and we would grow up in a chaotic environment. Rules do have a good purpose when they are fair and everyone understands them. Jesus only gave us two rules or commandments to follow. To love your God with everything that you are and to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Very easy and understandable rules to live by.

Adults Message:

It seems that the Hebrews have always had a covenant of sorts with God. Their covenants usually set out their responsibilities in order to be God's Chosen people. Covenants set the ground rules on how we relate and interact with God. In the past there were the Ten Commandments and they served the purpose for many years. They still do for many Christians. The Hebrews would take the Ten Commandments and expand them into 613 commandments. Converts to Orthodox Judaism have a very hard time living up to the 613 commandments. This is why Jews do not generally take converts. They say it is easier if you are born into it. Then there was the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision. This was a physical mark that identified a Hebrew man from others. It marked them as God's. I do not understand why God Almighty would be concerned about a little bit of skin. The early church struggled with this also. I am so glad for James insights and wisdom. Later there was a promise of a Messiah that was told by the prophets. Many asked how would this impact our relationship with God? God would keep that promise by sending His son and the new covenant He would reveal to us.

In the past there were many problems with our failure to live up to our side of the covenant. This resulted in a lot of guilt on our part. Either actual or perceived. That sadly shaped how we felt about ourselves and how we related to God. This guilt created a great sense of shame and failure. We could never please God. This guilt would alter our ability to grow as God's children and our understanding of our Creator. Guilt made us the child that did not love itself. Go to a family function

and talk to your siblings about who you thought was the favorite child. You never think yourself as the favorite one. Similar concept but in human terms.

This would all change with the coming of Jesus and His two commandments. That we are to love God with our whole being and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. The love of self is very important and Jesus knew it. If we love ourselves with all our faults and imperfections then we have accepted who we are. Then there is less room for serious guilt. We know who we are. Now we can function in a healthy way and be in covenant with God.

Our current covenant is the words spoken by Jesus on Maundy Thursday. The words of institution are recited by the clergy at the Eucharist. To do this when we remember Him. The words of this covenant have become the focal point of the Christian faith. We have remembered Him and recited these words of His for two thousand years. They are the glue that binds our communities together. That is the root of communion.

The words of institution spoken by Jesus removes sin. So that we can continue to grow and be in a relationship with God. Our sin is no longer a barrier. It has been removed by the words and actions of Jesus. We are told to do the same when we remember Him. It is the Son of God who has instructed us to do this. There is no middleman or prophet involved. Our Lord's words have greater power and clearer instruction than a prophet.

The events on Maundy Thursday fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament and provided us with a greater revelation of a New Covenant. The Old Testament covenants were based on works and

what people had to do to fulfill the covenant. Our Lord's covenant is based on grace that flows from God. The only works we need to do is to remember Him and His ministry amongst us. Our covenant is a real evolution in our relationship with God and how we understand our role. God is the one who removes our sin and makes us pure so that we can be in relationship with Him. Our new responsibility is to love God, ourselves and our neighbor. God will let the grace flow and do the rest. God Bless you all, Pastor D