

New Covenant

Luke 22:19-20 (ESV)

Jesus began a very important thing on the night of his betrayal. He implemented a new covenant with his disciples and with his church. The covenant is his promise to love and care for these his disciples. God had been in the business of making covenants, of guaranteeing his love and concern for his people. Time and time again God blessed his people with promises and assurances that he would be their God and they would be his people: Abraham, Noah, Moses, David. All received specific words and signs from the Lord so that they could be confident in their God. The Lord Jesus does the same for you. With these words, **“This is my body given for you...This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood”**, Jesus means to say, “You are my own and I am yours.”

JESUS MEANS TO PROMISE A NEW COVENANT FOR YOU THROUGH THE CROSS.

Well what is the purpose of his “new” covenant? What needed to change? Well, nothing needed to change. Jesus’ word “new” does not mean “new” as in different. It means “new” as in fulfillment. All of God’s previous covenants were pointing towards this. All of them were types or a foreshadowing of that which was to come. Each of those covenants were signs for each of God’s people that God cared. Yet, we know from this “new covenant” that the reason God could and did care all those times before was because of what Jesus was about to do on the cross. With this promise of Jesus he means to say, “All of the promises of my Father come to an end in me. His promise of life, salvation, reconciliation, forgiveness, all of that, is in this body and in this blood which will be given and shed for you.” So, when you read again the words of God’s previous covenants, as you read through what we call the “old testament”, always keep in mind how those covenants point to this true, new covenant.

The reality is that God’s covenant is the totality, the wholeness, of everything he gives you through the offering of Jesus. Every single way in which we can talk about God caring for you is found in this new covenant. The chief way we communicate this care of God is through speaking of the forgiveness of sins. Matthew’s Gospel specifically mentions this word of Jesus, that when he gave his body and blood for the disciples to eat and drink he said this was **“for the forgiveness of sins.”** This is the most important way that God relates to us is that he is the judge and we are on the bench, being measured by his law. Ever since Adam’s fall we are measured guilty; but, because of Jesus’ death in our place we get the verdict “innocent.” Your whole life is a life of living in God’s forgiveness of sins. In Baptism, you received the water of re-birth, and were washed with this forgiveness. In the weekly Divine Service, you begin by confessing your sins and receiving absolution from the pastor. And in the Lord’s Supper, you

receive food for your soul, the forgiveness of sins won by Jesus on the cross but delivered here for you to eat and to believe. Why does God use so many means and channels of granting you the forgiveness of sins? He wants to reassure you, to give you the confidence to know he is your God and you are his beloved. This life has many toils and hardships: regular temptations from the devil, regular weariness from your weak flesh, regular trails from the world. Here in the Lord's Supper, is the strength you can draw to continue your journey to eternal rest.

There are so many more ways God describes this care for us which flows out of the forgiveness of sins. God's care for you is also discussed in terms of having life. Previously you lived a life of death, of dying and vanishing away. Now, that death has been conquered by a greater death, by the death of Jesus, life reigns over death. And you have this very life which lives forever. God's care for you is also discussed in terms of having salvation. Previously you were in utter danger and ruin. Trials and tribulations left you feeling uneasy and insecure. Now, Christ, your rock and your refuge has given you the stability and security to be confident that you are safe from all harm. No one can touch you or lead you to misfortune. God's care for you is also discussed in terms of reconciliation. Previously you were an enemy of God. His wrath marked you as in the kingdom of the devil. You were estranged from your creator, an utter alien. Now you have been reconciled and renewed in your relationship with God. You are no longer an enemy, but now are a friend of God; and even greater, a child of God. Now instead of anger there is nothing but love and a tender-heart. All of these, life, salvation, and reconciliation (and many more images) flow out from the forgiveness of sins which Jesus has won for you on the cross and readily distribute to you in his body and blood eaten and drunk under the bread and the wine.

Where do we get the significance of this new covenant? Where is it explained how the Lord's Supper brings us this guarantee of God's care? It's all in Jesus' words which he spoke to his disciples. We always go back to these words. Last week, Pastor Wright emphasized that we ought to always use Jesus' words to better understand the Lord's Supper; what it is and who it is for. Yet, the words of Jesus always enlighten for us the meaning of the cross. That is why we always return to these words: **“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”** Mark especially these words: “do this in remembrance of me” and “given for you, poured out for you.”

When Jesus commands us to celebrate the Lord's Supper “in remembrance of him”, he is showing us two things. First, he shows us that this meal is all about him and all about his work. This meal is a special connection to that day he spent at Golgotha, bearing the wrath of God on himself in our place, destroying death and the devil through his precious blood. This meal can never be separated from that moment. It is a constant reminder, even if we didn't have many images of Christ hanging on the cross. Second,

Jesus places that special covenantal language on the Lord's Supper. "The remembrance of me" also means that Jesus is the one who remembers us through giving his body and his blood for us to eat and drink. Jesus remembers you with his grace and favor when he gives you his body and blood to eat and to drink. This is the special token that he has established as the sign of his love. This again is the fulfillment of all the ways God remembered his people when they were in need of mercy. God remembered Noah and his family, when they waited for the waters to subside after the flood. God remembered his servant Rachel, wife of Jacob, when her womb was barren and she had no child. God remembered his people Israel in Egypt, when they cried for help in the midst of Pharaoh's cruelty. God remembers his people when they are in need; Jesus remembers you. Under the weight of your sin, under the sickness of death, under the seeming estrangement from God: Jesus remembers you.

These words of remembrance, these words of Jesus' covenant all come through special tokens and gifts. He doesn't just give you these words of promise (not that those wouldn't be enough). He gives you his body which was handed over and his blood which was spilt. You ought to always be assured that Jesus' ascension to that cross was always for you. Keep that in the forefront of your mind when you hear those words "given for you, shed for you." This cross was for you. There are a lot of misunderstandings of the cross. There are a lot of people who want to create their own Jesus, picking and choosing what things they want to listen to. To know Jesus rightly you must look at his cross and why he had to endure it. To know why he had to endure it, you must look to his words given at the Lord's Supper. It was always a sacrifice for you, for your sins, so that you might taste God's new covenant for all mankind to receive.

The whole Gospel is presented here in the Lord's Supper. Through these words of Jesus, concerning him giving you his body and his blood to drink, in his new covenant, for the forgiveness of sins, you can understand everything about his life and ministry. You can understand why he came down from heaven. You can understand why he had to bear the cross. You can understand why he wishes to share all this with you. All this is encapsulated in those words "**This is my body given for you...This cup poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood...**" Mark those words well and treasure them. Amen.