



Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney's Lent Course 2024

THE WAY TO THE CROSS

MONDAY 18 MARCH



GOD'S COVENANT WITH US

Themes in the readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent include God's covenant with us. The readings for the First Sunday of Lent included God's covenant with Noah, symbolised by the rainbow. This Sunday we hear the reading from Jeremiah about the new covenant God will have with humanity.

The first reading is from the prophet Jeremiah, one of the three major prophets (with Isaiah and Ezekiel). Jeremiah is sometimes known as the 'weeping prophet' and he was a prophet to the Israelites in exile in Babylon. The reading is taken from chapter 31, which along with chapters 30-33 is about God's promise of restoration including Jeremiah's "new covenant". This is a section which is interpreted differently in Judaism and Christianity.

The Israelites are in exile, in a strange land, with different language and customs. Jeremiah is reminding them that God is always faithful to them, even if they are not faithful to God. The promises of God, the covenants of stone are those received by Moses (the ten commandments). At the beginning of Lent we heard of the sign of God's covenant with Noah - the rainbow. However, Jeremiah 31.31-34 tells us that the new covenant will be different, not written on stone but in people's hearts.

Psalm 51 is a Psalm of penitence, it speaks of individual's sins and prayers for personal forgiveness, pardon and restoration. This is accompanied by the theme of God's mercy. The psalmist asks for God's mercy but at the same time remembers God's steadfast love, a love that never ceases and abides forever (v1).

Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

Most merciful God,
by the death and
resurrection of your
Son Jesus Christ you
created humanity
anew. May the power
of his victorious
cross transform
those who turn in
faith to him who
lives and reigns with
you and the Holy
Spirit, one God, now
and for ever.
Amen.

The psalmist is very aware of their transgressions against God and they are causing them to be in distress. However, they know God is merciful and know God's love of them. It is this awareness of God's love for them that means the psalmist remains faithful to God. In verses 4-6 there is the psalmist's confession, and continues this conversation with God in verses 7-9. Recognising who they are the psalmist asks God to transform them - with a desire for a clean heart and a new spirit to seek to live life anew (verse 12).

The reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus as the High Priest. This is an image central to the whole book of Hebrews - Jesus Christ as high priest who stands before God on behalf of humanity and offers up prayers and sacrifice for our salvation. Jesus was chosen by God for this purpose and is compared to other priests in salvation history. In verses 6 and 10 Jesus is referred to as a "high priest according to the order of Melchizedek". There is a longer discussion of this in Hebrews 7. The passage contains references to Jesus' death, pain and suffering and what that means for humanity.

'We want to see Jesus' is a question at the beginning of John 12.20-33. Some Greeks are visiting Jerusalem at the time of Passover. We never hear if they got to meet Jesus or perhaps were witnesses at the crucifixion but they had heard about Jesus and wanted to meet him. Perhaps they'd heard of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, of the feeding of the multitudes, of Jesus' healing, preaching and teaching. However, it is this context that Jesus declares that the hour has come, having previously said that the time was coming. In this context Jesus uses an agricultural metaphor - verses 24-25. We are told that 'unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. '. This could be about community as single grains remain single grains. It also reminds us, particularly apt during Spring, of the cycle of life, death and life springing forth. The new Christian life comes from death, the death of Jesus, the death of old ways and the new life of discipleship promises more but different fruit.

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31.33b

Usual Weekly Pattern

Sunday
RCL Eucharist
Readings and Collect

Monday
Delving Deeper into
the Readings

Tuesday
Words from Others
(sacred & secular)

Wednesday
Resources from the
Arts

Thursday
Contemplative Acts

Friday
Personal Reflection
- what this means to
me

Saturday
Acts & Deeds

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT

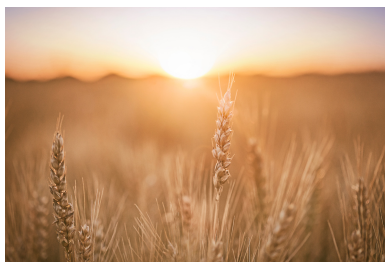
- Jeremiah speaks of a day when everyone will know God. What does it mean to you to “know the Lord”? What does this look like in your daily life, in your decisions and how does it feel to you to ‘know the Lord’?



- In Jeremiah 31.33 the Lord says ‘But this is the covenant that 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 on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ‘ What do you think it means to have the law within in you and to have it written on your heart?

- In the Gospel of John 12.25 Jesus says “Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” What do you think Jesus means by “love their life” and “hate their life in this world”?

- What does v24-25 “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” make you think of? What might be Jesus saying here mean for you as an individual and to you as part of your Christian community?



A clean heart
create in me,
O God.

*Refrain for
Psalm 51.1-12*

Eternal God,
the light of the
minds that know
you,
the joy of the
hearts that love
you,
and the strength
of the wills that
serve you:
grant us so to
know you
that we may
truly love you,
so to love you
that we may
truly serve you,
whose service is
perfect freedom;
through Jesus
Christ our Lord.
Amen

*after Augustine
of Hippo (430)*