

Sermon followed by Service

April 14, 2022 - Maundy Thursday Jeremiah 31:31-34

It's been a bad day, a bad day at work. You really messed up. The boss comes in and says it: "You really messed up. But here's what I'm going to do about it. Here's a new contract, better than the one you had before." What do you think?

Now why would God give us a new contract? People usually get new contracts when they do something right -- when they do their work right or they win the right games or they pay the right amount of money. And if you don't do the work right, or don't win the right games, or don't pay the right kind of money, you usually don't get a new contract; instead, you get cut loose.

That's what we deserve from God. Our work doesn't meet God's standard: "Be perfect; be holy." Our own, we fall short of God's approval, "Good job, well done." We haven't done what it takes to deserve or demand a new contract from God. What we deserve is for God to exercise his judgment clause: "The soul that sins, it shall die."

Instead, God gives us a new contract. Why? Let's take a quick look at the old contract. The old contract was given to God's people at Mount Sinai. It was a two way contract. If the people would obey God, then God would bless them. If they would disobey God, then they would be breaking their contract, and God would punish them. The people agreed to that contract. But even before Moses got down from Mount Sinai with the contract papers, those two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments, the people broke their contract with God and worshiped a Golden Calf. So why did God give us a new contract? Not because we fulfilled the old contract and deserved a new contract, but because we broke the old contract and needed a new one or else we would have been judged unfit and cut loose from God.

There is another reason we needed a new contract with God. The old contract couldn't offer us what we needed. The old contract given at Mount Sinai was a law contract. It told God's people what to do and what not to do. Not only was it burdensome, it was impossible to keep. The old contract tried to control just about every part of life - from food, fashion, and hairstyles, to work, worship, and even the kind of wishing you did in your heart. But with all its demands, the law, that old contract, couldn't give us what we needed. The law demanded love, but gave no power to love; the law demanded rightness, but gave no power to live

right. The law charged people with sin, but it had no power to save people from their sins. All the sacrifices made at the temple, all the blood poured out on the altar meant nothing and could do nothing, without the blood of the lamb of God, Jesus Christ. So why did God give us a new contract? Again, not because we did right by the old contract, but because the old contract couldn't give us what we needed.

So what was the point of the old contract? If it couldn't give the people what they needed, if it was just a matter of time before the people broke it, then why did God give it in the first place? God wanted to shape his people's lives to reflect his values, to keep them separate from their heathen neighbors, to teach them about right and wrong, sin and forgiveness, to keep at least some of his people on the right track for the day when he would send his Son Jesus into the world as Savior with a new contract. It was never God's intention for that old contract to last forever.

Now God has given us his new contract. Again, not because we deserve a new contract, but because we need a new contract. Our lesson shows us that this new contract is better than the old contract because it meets our needs in three ways.

First, in the new contract God meets our needs by changing us. We were born into this world dead in our sins, dead set against God. And the old contract couldn't change that. Laws written on tablets of stone couldn't make our hearts love God or live good. People telling us, "know the LORD," couldn't make our dead hearts alive with faith and love. But God's new contract does! In his new contract with the church, God says, **"I will put my law, my teaching, in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."**

The old contract demanded a right relationship with God; the old contract demanded faith and love, mercy and justice. God's new contract works in a different way. Instead of demanding from us, God gives to us. He takes unbelieving minds, implants his teaching and promise, and makes our minds alive with faith. He takes cold and selfish hearts, writes his love onto our hearts, and makes us alive with his love. Instead of just telling us what to do to be his people, in his new contract God changes us from the inside to be his people.

But what about all our old contract penalties? Again, God's new contract meets our needs - **"I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."** Instead of punishing us for our sins, God put himself under contract to forgive us.

This is the new covenant, the new testament that Jesus was talking about on Maundy Thursday when he said, "This is my blood of the covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins." In the Old Testament, covenants were often put into effect with a blood sacrifice. And because the only way to get rid of sin was to pay with blood, God's new contract of forgiveness could only be put into effect with blood - not just any blood, but the blood of a special sacrifice - the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus' blood, shed on the cross, paid the price of our sins. Jesus' blood washed our guilt away. With Jesus' blood, God's new forgiveness contract is made valid and put into effect. And now in the Lord's Supper, Jesus keeps that contract before us - **"I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."**

But what if we break this new covenant, then what? Then God wouldn't have to keep his end of the bargain, would he? Here again God's new contract for us is a contract that meets our needs, because we can't break this one. As I said before, God's old contract with his people was a two-way contract -- if we would do our part, then God would do his part. If we would obey, then God would bless. The problem was we could never do our "if" part; we could never keep our part of the contract. If we were still under that old covenant, we would always be cursed under God's punishment.

But God's new contract is different. Check the wording of the contract. God says, **"I will make a covenant ... this is the covenant I will make ... I will put my law; I will write; I will be their God; I will forgive ... I will remember their sins no more."** In this new contract, what does God tell us to do? What does he command us? What laws, what obligations does he give us? None! Nothing! In God's new contract there is no law for us to keep, no obligation for us to live up to, no condition "if we do this" or "if we don't do that." God's new contract for us is a one-sided contract. And notice who is doing the work. Notice who has all the duties and obligations in this new contract. It's God! He's taken all the duties, all the obligations, all the responsibilities for himself.

In God's new contract with us, being baptized, going to the Lord's Supper, is not our part of the contract. In Baptism and the Lord's Supper we aren't doing something for God, God is working and doing for us. When we have sinned and

need forgiveness, we don't confess and pray as our part in the contract, we are simply asking God to keep his promise and stand by his contract. When we come to church, when we love God, when we live good, again we are not doing our part in the contract. God didn't give us a part to do in this new contract, we are simply thanking God for doing his part.

What does that mean for us? Because we have no condition in this new contract, we can't break it. Because God is doing all the work in the new contract, we can't break it. And because God will not and cannot break his own contract, what do we get to know? God's new contract will always stand true - **“I will be your God, you will be my people. I will forgive your wickedness and will remember your sins no more.”** Amen.

Holy Thursday

St. John Lutheran
Libertyville, Illinois
April 14, 2022



HOLY THURSDAY

April 14, 2022

WE WELCOME OUR GUESTS and pray that all who are with us today are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns and by an encouraging and warm welcome. Our worship service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ: forgiveness and peace, help and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven. The notes below may be helpful for your worship and time with us today. If you have questions, please ask! We are blessed to have you with us!

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church, celebrating the Lord's Supper only with those who are close and united with us in faith and teaching. In this sacrament we give public confession of our doctrinal unity and fellowship; therefore, we invite visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us in the sacrament. We ask our fellow Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice and refrain from the Lord's Supper at this time. If you have questions, please speak with the pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us for worship. Baby noises can be beautiful to our Savior who said, "Let the little children come to me." If children are crying loudly, our nursery and Gathering Area (back of the church) are audio-equipped and available for you and your young children. After the children regain their composure, come back so we can all worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

Hearing Assistance for those with hearing aids is provided through our *Hearing Loop*. More information is available from an usher.

A *wheelchair lift* is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.

Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

ORGAN MEDITATION

"A Lenten Suite: 1. A Solemn Prelude"

by Charles Callahan

"D Minor and C Major"

by George Frederic Handel

"O Lord, We Praise You"

By Kevin Hildebrand

OPENING HYMN

"O Lord, We Praise You"

Hymn 673

M: Lord God, you have brought us safely to this hour of evening prayer. We thank you for providing all that we need for body and life. Bless us who have gathered in your name. Forgive our sins. Speak to our hearts. Dispel our sorrows with the comfort of your Word, and receive our hymns of thanks and praise, through Jesus Christ, our living Savior, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

THE GREAT LITANY

M: O God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth,

C: **Have mercy on us.**

M: O God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

C: **Have mercy on us.**

M: O God the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide,

C: **Have mercy on us.**

M: From all spiritual blindness; from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice; and from all lack of charity:

C: **Good Lord, deliver us.**

M: From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, from hardness of heart and contempt for your Word and your will:

C: **Good Lord, deliver us.**

M: From earthquake and tempest; from drought, fire, and flood; from civil strife and violence; from war and murder; and from dying suddenly and unprepared:

C: **Good Lord, deliver us.**

- M: In our times of trouble, in our times of prosperity, in the hour of death, and on the day of judgment:
- C: **Good Lord, deliver us.**
- M: Receive our prayers, O Lord our God.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Govern and direct your holy Church, fill it with love and truth, and grant it that unity which is according to your will.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Enlighten all ministers with true knowledge and understanding of your Word, that by their preaching and living they may declare it clearly and show its truth.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Encourage and prosper your servants who spread the gospel in all the world, and send out laborers into the harvest.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Bless and keep your people, that all may find and follow their true vocation and ministry.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Give us hearts to love and reverence you, that we may diligently live according to your commandments.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: To all your people, give grace to hear and receive your Word and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Come to the help of all who are in danger, necessity, and trouble; protect all who travel by land, air, or water; and show your pity on all prisoners and captives.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Strengthen and preserve all women who are in childbirth and all young children, and comfort the aged, the bereaved, and the lonely.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Defend and provide for the widowed and the orphaned, the refugees and the homeless, the unemployed, and all who are desolate and oppressed.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**
- M: Heal those who are sick in body or mind, and give skill and compassion to all who care for them.
- C: **Hear us, good Lord.**

C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

PSALM 116D

I WILL TAKE THE CUP OF SALVATION

Refrain

I will take the cup of sal-va - tion and call on the
 name of the LORD. I will take the cup of sal-va - tion
 and call on the name of the LORD.

Tone

I love the LORD, for he / heard my voice;
 he heard my cry for / mercy.
 Because he turned his / ear to me,
 I will call on him as long / as I live.

For you, LORD, have delivered / me from death,
 my eyes from tears, my feet from / stumbling,
 that I may walk be- / fore the LORD
 in the land of the / living. *Refrain (Next Page)*

Refrain



I will take the cup of sal-va - tion and call on the
name of the LORD. I will take the cup of sal-va - tion
and call on the name of the LORD.

Tone



What shall I return / to the LORD
for all his good- / ness to me?
I will lift up the cup of sal- / vation
and call on the name / of the LORD.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain**

GOSPEL

Luke 22:7–20

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.”

“Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked.

He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."

They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

PSALM 116D
Refrain



I will take the cup of sal-va - tion and call on the
name of the LORD. I will take the cup of sal-va - tion
and call on the name of the LORD.

READING

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD,
 “when I will make a new covenant
 with the people of Israel
 and with the people of Judah.
 It will not be like the covenant
 I made with their ancestors
 when I took them by the hand
 to lead them out of Egypt,
 because they broke my covenant,
 though I was a husband to them,”
 declares the LORD.

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel
 after that time,” declares the LORD.

“I will put my law in their minds
 and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,

and they will be my people.

No longer will they teach their neighbor,
 or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’
 because they will all know me,
 from the least of them to the greatest,”
 declares the LORD.

“For I will forgive their wickedness
 and will remember their sins no more.”

PSALM 116D

Refrain

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 name of the LORD. I will take the cup of sal-va - tion
 and call on the name of the LORD.

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

“This is the covenant I will make with them
after that time, says the Lord.
I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds.”

Then he adds:

“Their sins and lawless acts
I will remember no more.”

And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

PSALM 116D

Refrain

I will take the cup of sal-va - tion and call on the
name of the LORD. I will take the cup of sal-va - tion
and call on the name of the LORD.

SERMON

INSTRUCTION FOR THE END OF LENT

M: In this Lenten season we have heard again how our Lord walked the path of suffering which led him to the cross for our salvation. We have also heard our Lord’s call to intensify our struggle against sin, death, and the devil—all that keeps us from loving God and each other. This is the struggle to which we were committed at Baptism; God’s forgiveness and the power of his Spirit to amend our lives continue with us because of his love for us in Jesus, our Savior.

Within the family of the Church, God never wearies of giving peace and new life. In the absolution we receive forgiveness as from God himself. This absolution we should not doubt, but firmly believe that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven, for it comes to us in the name and by the command of our Lord.

We who receive God’s love in Jesus Christ are called to love one another, to be servants to each other, as Jesus became our servant.

In Holy Communion the members of Christ’s body participate most intimately in his love. Remembering our Lord’s last supper with his disciples, we eat the bread and drink the cup of this meal. Together we receive the Lord’s gift of his body and blood for forgiveness and participate in that new covenant that makes us one with him and one another. The Lord’s Supper is the promise of the great banquet we will share with all the faithful when our Lord returns, the joyous culmination of our reconciliation with God and each other.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

M: Let us confess our sins to God and ask for his forgiveness.

C: **Almighty God, merciful Father,
I confess to you that I have not loved you with all my heart.
In what I have done and left undone,
I have pursued my ways instead of your ways.
For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity.
I am truly sorry for my sins.
I repent of them.
I beg for your mercy, O Lord.**

Silence for meditation.

M: Forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us.

C: **Cleanse me from my sins.**

Release me from my guilt.

Grant me your Holy Spirit to amend my sinful life.

M: The almighty God has been merciful to us and has sent his Son to die for all. For his sake, God forgives our sins and calls us from darkness to his marvelous light. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

EXHORTATION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven us and reconciled us to God and has promised us the power to forgive and love each other. Relying on his promise, therefore, be reconciled with one another.

All: Brothers and sisters, may the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, in our words, and in our actions.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion you give us your true body and blood as a remembrance of your suffering and death on the cross. Grant us so firmly to believe your words and promise that we may always partake of this Sacrament to our eternal good; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink, from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD

CW p.186

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us your peace.

DISTRIBUTION

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

CHOIR

“What is This Bread”

*What is this bread? Christ’s body risen from the dead:
this bread we break, this life we take,
was crushed to pay for our release. O taste and see—the Lord is peace.*

*What is this wine? The blood of Jesus shed for mine;
the cup of grace brings his embrace
of life and love until I sing! O taste and see — the Lord is King.*

*So who am I, that I should live and he should die
under the rod? My God, my God,
why have you not forsaken me? O taste and see — the Lord is free.*

*Yet is God here? Oh, yes! By Word and promise clear,
in mouth and soul he makes us whole —
Christ, truly present in this meal. O taste and see — the Lord is real.*

*Is this for me? I am forgiven and set free!
I do believe that I receive
his very body and his blood. O taste and see — the Lord is good.*

M: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good

C: **And his mercy endures forever.**

M: O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR

The altar, which symbolizes Christ, is stripped in token of Jesus' abandonment by his disciples in Gethsemane. After the choir finishes singing, we exit the church silently and return to continue our worship tomorrow, Good Friday. If you wish to speak with pastor, he will be available in his office (front pulpit-side of church).

CHOIR ANTHEM

"The Garden of Gethsemane"
Hymn 424

*The Garden of Gethsemane — they'd often gathered there,
the Christ and his disciple friends, the sheep beneath his care.
But when the Shepherd needed them — "Come, watch and pray with me" —
their heavy hearts and eyes prevailed in dark Gethsemane.*

*Gethsemane's serenity, so pleasant in the past,
was shattered by a piercing cry. Our Savior stood aghast —
to see the curse inside the cup, to sense what soon would be
unleashed against his sinless soul beyond Gethsemane.*

*Gethsemane's intensity, revealed in blood-like sweat,
led Christ to pray, for he would pay sin's awful, crushing debt.
"My Father, find another way to set the sinner free.
Your will, not mine, be done," he said in sad Gethsemane.*

*Gethsemane's immensity can still be seen today.
The Father's will was crystal clear: "There is no other way!
Move on, my Son; your death alone can save humanity."
So, bound and destined for the cross, Christ left Gethsemane.*

*Gethsemane's tranquility returned again that night;
the conflict moved to Calvary, where Jesus won the fight.
There is no cup for us to drink, no curse, no penalty —
to know the lavish love of God, recall Gethsemane!*

OFFERING

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan
this code with your mobile device.*



*We welcome you to come and worship with us again!
Good Friday Tenebrae Service at 7:00 pm and
Easter Sunday Services at 9:00 and 11:00 am*

*We also invite you to join us for Easter Fellowship,
downstairs in the Fellowship Hall, between the services.*

For all, we have food and fellowship.

*For our young children (preschool to grade 5),
we have a special Easter activity and egg hunt.*

*Egg hunters gather in the Fellowship Hall to go on the hunt at
about 10:30.*

Any and all, we won't mind if you help clean up.

Acknowledgements

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