

# “God’s Plan For You”

Jer. 31:31-34

In our Old Testament lesson, the Lord speaks through the prophet Jeremiah, and He says: A time is coming when I will make a new covenant...It will not be like the covenant I made with Moses. Because I am loving and merciful, I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.

More than 600 years before Jesus suffered and died on the cross, Jeremiah told the people that a new covenant had to be established, because the old covenant did not provide salvation.

And even though Jeremiah, Isaiah, Moses, and other prophets continually directed the people’s attention to the need for a new covenant; a new, different kind of sacrifice; the people did not pay attention. And there are people today, you hear them every year around this time, who say: “Wouldn’t it have been wonderful if the people had only listened to Jesus, repented of their sins, followed His teachings, and not caused Him to suffer in the way that He did?”

There is a major problem with that way of thinking. Things would have been better if the people had not crucified Jesus? Jesus had to

be crucified. That was the plan ever since God spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden. There was no second option. The ransom price had to be paid. Jesus tells the disciples: “and what shall I say? ‘Father save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.”

A new covenant had to be established, and you cannot establish a covenant without blood being shed. When God made His covenant with Abraham, he told Abraham to sacrifice a heifer, a goat, a ram, a pigeon, and a dove. The animals were cut in half and laid on the ground. Blood was shed. Then Abraham fell into a deep sleep and the Lord told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years, but that the Lord would rescue them and establish them in the land of Canaan: the Promised Land on which he was sleeping.

God made another covenant with Abraham through circumcision. Blood was shed.

God made a covenant with Moses and the Israelites on Mt. Sinai. Moses was instructed to sacrifice some young bulls. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar of the Lord. Half of the blood was put in bowls and Moses sprinkled that blood on the people.

When it came time to fulfill the Word of the Lord spoken through the prophets, when it came time for the new and better covenant to be established, blood had to be shed.

Jesus tells His disciples at the Last Supper: “This is the new covenant in My blood shed for you for the remission of sins.” This new covenant of forgiveness only comes through the blood of Christ. Sins would not be paid for and Satan would not be defeated by the people of this world being nicer to one another – or being nicer to Jesus back in the day.

Jesus had to be lifted up on the cross, and His blood had to be spilled onto the ground. In doing this, sin, death and Satan were all defeated; the new covenant was established; the new covenant was fulfilled; and all of our sins were paid for.

It was not through simple water that our sins were washed away in Baptism. It is not through mere bread and wine that we receive forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is through the living Word of God, joined with that water (Scripture tells us we were washed in the blood of the Lamb); it is through the Word of God (the broken body and shed blood of Christ our Lord), the Word made flesh, in, with, and under the form of bread and wine.

As we hear Christ say in the Gospel of Mark, “The Son of Man *will* be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they *will* condemn him to death . . . And they *will* mock Him and spit on Him, and flog Him and kill Him.” This was the plan. The wages of sin is death. Sin cannot be covered unless a sacrifice is made.

Jesus says elsewhere, “But I, *when* I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” Through that sacrifice establishing this new and better covenant, God has fulfilled His promises; He has forgiven all of your iniquity and He remembers your sins no more.

In our confirmation classes, both the youth who are being confirmed next week and the adults who are being confirmed in the late service (tomorrow), the word iniquity is one that comes up often. What is iniquity? Simply, it means guilt.

You are forgiven the guilt of your sin. You are not innocent – you are still a sinner, but you are declared “not guilty” by God who is the final judge.

From the beginning, God had a plan to rescue you and all of Adam’s children from the Fall into sin. The sacrifice of His perfect Son – the blood of Jesus, the death of the Son of God was the only sacrifice suitable to fulfill the Law of God. That was the plan. “The Son of Man *will* be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they *will* condemn him to death . . . And they *will* mock Him and spit on Him, and flog Him and kill Him.”

That was the plan, because God had promised, “I *will* forgive their iniquity, and I *will* remember their sins no more.” Rejoice that you are included in God’s plan. Amen.