

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, March 17th, 2024, Lent V
Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 119:9-16, Hebrews 5:5-10, John 12:20-33

Interesting, it is Lent and the idea of penitential themes and concepts. And here we have both the New Covenant being expressed in Jeremiah and the priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek. What is going on?

The wording in Jeremiah is significant: *The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant.* This means we have something to look forward to. Not now but in the future. After Easter?

And Jeremiah continues: the Lord saying, I will be their God and they will be my people. Thus, not being alone and our relationship with God and each other. This can be comforting.

Jeremiah continues, or rather before the previous comment: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.* Therefore, the spirit of God within and around us.

This is good news because I don't know about you, but sometimes I wonder if God in the vastness of the world would be interested in what is happening to me. I have thought previously, that interestingly, the major religions of the world have come into existence and formed during a time when the concept of a three-tiered universe was the thought of the day. With earth at the centre and heaven above and hell below. Or at least earth as the centre of the known world. What is out there has grown by leaps and bounds.

Even with the understanding of the world at the time of Jesus, the story of Jesus does not make sense. The Son of God coming to earth to be born in human form does not make sense. Then to be born in Bethlehem. A small town in a small country which was only of interest because it was between Egypt and the East. It was not a destination but a place for passing through.

I mentioned this at Bible Study, and others had a different reaction. That Jesus had to be born in a place like Israel and Galilee at the time. That he could not be born in Rome as a Roman citizen, he would not have been crucified as an outcast and as a rebel and threat to Rome and the authorities. And the political and social and economic geography of the time had a part to play.

The answer seems to be I will write in upon their hearts. The spirit of God comes to us, to be in and around us. There is no distance between us and God. And Jeremiah goes on to say, *No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,*

God will come to us directly with no go between, and not just those in power. The seeing Jesus and God from different perspectives.

Yet in the Gospel we have go-betweens as Greeks come to Philip and want to see Jesus and Philip goes to Andrew and together, they go to Jesus. It is a combination.

Then Jesus talks about the wheat dying to bear much fruit. The losing and saving of life.

And in Hebrews we have You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. And the concept of the Priesthood of all believers.

The good news, that we are connected to the big picture of the resurrection and Easter which goes beyond our own lives. But there is a caveat, in this context the future may be both good news and bad, or not as good,

The gifts we are receive are to be passed on for the benefit of others. The trials and concerns we will have moving forward will be balanced with the great news of Easter, but we will still be called to bear fruit which will carry and element of sacrifice which may not feel like sacrifice in the face of love and value.

Amen.

May the God who shakes heaven and earth,
whose Spirit blows through the valleys and the hills;
whom death could not contain and
who lives to disturb and bring us life;
bless us with the power to endure,
to hope and to love. Amen.
(Source: [Elizabeth Raine](#))