

SERMON FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY 2022

TEXT: JEREMIAH 31: 31-34

THEME: AN OFFER TOO GOOD TO REFUSE

31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. **33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares 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. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

In the name of Jesus:

I remember on my trip to the Holy Land a word of warning from our guide, David Benson, who said to us as we were getting off of the bus to go into the marketplace of the city of Jerusalem: “Beware of the street salesmen, because they will try to sell you goods that are not worth the price that they are asking you to pay. Don’t deal with them, because when they tell you that they have a deal for you that is too good to refuse, it probably is wise to refuse it, because it isn’t that great of a deal.”

We have all been there, haven’t we, approached by someone who tells us that they have something to offer us that is too good to refuse. A stock market

tip, the deal that the salesman is offering on a new or used car, perhaps it is a recommendation from a friend of something that they want us to purchase or at least consider purchasing. The offer seems good on the surface, but when you think about it over time, it really isn't that great of a deal. It isn't an offer too good to refuse. Because there is often the fine print that is so small that when you read it, you realize that it is in your best interest to refuse the deal. When you examine the details of the offer, the offer isn't that great. It is easy to overpromise and under deliver.

So consider the people of Jeremiah's day, when Jeremiah says these words: **31** "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. **33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares 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. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Those who heard

Jeremiah couldn't believe what they were hearing. They were brought up in the covenant that was made of stone. The Torah, the Law, the Ten Commandments were given to the people. Do this and live, they were taught. That was the deal, be holy as the Lord your God is holy. They tried, and failed.

At the time of Jeremiah the nations of Israel and Judah were in shambles. The Northern and Southern Kingdoms had continually broken the Ten Commandments. They had forsaken their first love, they no longer loved God, no longer listened to Him or followed Him, they sought to cheat and rob and lie to their neighbor. They had neglected and forsaken God and the writing was on the wall. The Northern Kingdom was taken lock stock and barrel to the country of Assyria and the Southern Kingdom was about to be taken into exile in Babylon. The people whom God called out of Egypt, the people who were led by Moses from Egypt to the Promised Land, the people who were fed manna in the wilderness, and who were blessed to hear the prophetic message of God's Word through the likes of Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and now Jeremiah, they rejected God and His messengers. They were judged by the Lord for their unfaithfulness. They now had no land, no nation, nothing to call their own. They were rejected by God because they rejected Him.

In spite of this, Jeremiah makes this offer, an offer from the Lord Himself. God has a new covenant, a new deal for His people. It is like Jeremiah is

saying: “Look, the Lord really does have an offer for you that is too good to refuse!”

So why is God doing this, and making to them this offer? One reason and one reason only, God loves them. God loves the sinner with an everlasting love. And so, it is because of the love that God has for His people that He will make with them a new covenant, not etched in stone, but marked with the blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Jeremiah, over 500 years before the time of Jesus, is pointing people, all people to Jesus, the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world.

This Lamb of God, Jesus, will really show sinners that God indeed loves them. It moved the Holy Spirit to write: “While we were yet sinners, God loved us!” That is the message, the offer God had for the people who heard Jeremiah back then, it is the offer God has for you and for all who hear it today: God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, so that be believing in Him, you will have life and salvation. God’s offer of salvation is not based on anything that you can do or would be able to do. It is an offer rooted in His deep love for you. For you have been saved by grace, a free gift of His love for you, through faith in Jesus, so that you can’t boast that this is of your own doing, this is solely because of the love of God for you and for all.

It is really hard to imagine, isn't it? After all, when we love things or people, it is because we find value in the person or the object of our affection. We love people because we find them to be loveable or likable. There is something attractive about them. But God's love is different. As sinners, there is nothing loveable about any of us, all of our righteous thoughts, words, and actions are filthy and damnable in God's eyes.

God's love for you and men in the world is not because God finds us attractive, likable, or lovable. He loves us in spite of ourselves. He loves us by grace. He loves the unworthy and unlovable. He loves poor, miserable sinners, just like you and me.

It is hard to imagine, it is difficult to grasp. But it is yours nevertheless. God loves you, He sent His Son Jesus to live, to be betrayed, to suffer and die for you. And to show you this love, He has baptized you in His love in the waters of Baptism. He has washed away your sins. He has given to you a saving faith in Jesus. He speaks Good News to you now and forever, that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And Christ Jesus comes to you tonight, to offer to you the new covenant in the Holy Supper. For the night when Jesus was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying: Take eat this is My Body, given for you. And then He took the cup and said take and

drink of it, all of you for this is the very blood of Jesus given in this new covenant for the forgiveness of all of your sins.

So dear friend, come to the House of God. Hear God's good News of love for you in Christ Jesus. Remember that you are baptized and that you belong to Jesus. Come forward to receive the very Body and Blood of Christ for your forgiveness, for this is the new covenant God for you. God has an offer of eternal life for you in Jesus. Take it by faith, and then live in that love all the days of your life, to the glory of God and in Jesus' name.

Amen