

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of
Saint David
March 03, 2013

THE COVENANT PROMISE



FOCUS: Reformed theology is covenant theology – an expression of a unique relationship with God and others, first through Israel of old and now in Jesus Christ. Our Lenten journey will explore how this relationship has been lived out over the millennia. The readings are from the Lenten lectionary.

Gathering: *Only the hungry search for bread. Only the thirsty look for water. This is a place for those who are hungry and thirsty in spirit. Only those who ache for meaning will pursue it. Only those who yearn for a deeper life will seek it. This is a place for those who ache and yearn for something more. So let us come here today with our hunger and thirst, our unsatisfied longings, our heart-felt yearnings, and let the God of life satisfy our souls.* (written by Ann Siddall)

Hymn: You thirsty ones (1-2)

Prayer of Confession: *We gather today, O Lord of Life, seeking fullness. Not the fullness our world offers, but fullness that comes from You. We spend so much of our lives on things that do not count. Things that promise much and give little. Help us now... today, to find fulfillment in Your love, May we discover all you have to give, And seek You while we yet have the gift of days. Lift us O God, to a higher plane of living, as we lift our hearts and minds and souls into Your Holy presence. Amen! Make it so Lord! Amen! With God's help, we confront our fears and struggles, and we call upon a power greater than our own to resist their pull. Hear us, Holy One, as we confess our frailty and failings.* (Silent prayers of confession).

Words of Assurance *Though fear should beset us; though danger cause us to close up our doors; though troubles assail and lead us away from the ways of grace; only one thing is necessary: just turn back to God's promise of grace. Remember that God is reaching out with loving arms, and let yourself be held. Only ask for forgiveness, and it is ours: know that in this moment we have asked and in Christ Jesus, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen*

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-9 Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than

the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Continuing the Conversation: Our passage from Isaiah comes from the beautiful Book of Comfort, addressed to the Jewish people in exile in Babylon almost six hundred years before Jesus. We know that a prophet speaks sternly to the people when they need it, but also knows how to speak tenderly, to convey God's great love and mercy, when the people need to hear that message as well; in fact, that really brings out the poet in a prophet. And this prophet knows that the people are hungry for a message of hope, a message that promises an end to their captivity and a different way of life, back home, where they can be who they are called to be, and live lives faithful to the God who has made an everlasting covenant with them. And the emphasis is on the covenant promise! Many of us may be attempting with varying degrees of success one kind of Lenten discipline or another, to learn to act and think in new ways that will transform not only our lives but the world around us. It's hard work, and it requires persistence. Two weeks into Lent, we may have already become discouraged, but that may be a result of thinking that pure willpower on our own part is the source of our strength and the determinant of what will happen in our lives. And why not? We breathe in a culture of self-determination—the peril of freedom, perhaps—and find it difficult to admit our powerlessness in the face of the relentless seductions and messages of our culture. Maybe the point of Lent is for us to adjust our sights so that we at least understand what it is we should hunger for, or in fact what we do hunger and thirst for, in our deepest being: justice, mercy, peace, healing, acceptance, love. And not just for ourselves, but for all of God's children. That must be what shalom looks and sounds and feels like, and it's at the heart of the biblical message.

Hymn: You thirsty ones (3-5) 190

Invitation: Come to the table. Feast and rejoice. Come for the meal. Receive that you may give.

Hymn: Here, O my Lord (verses 1-3) 543
Prayer of Thanksgiving: *May the God of everlasting covenants be with you! And also with you! Lift up your thirsty hearts to God. We long for the waters of grace to fill us. Sing praises to the One who feeds us with wonder. Our mouths praise God with joy on our lips. We come in gratitude. With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you to be a living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service. You made an everlasting covenant with us, though we forsook your way. Still, you call the thirsty to come to the waters; you invite the poor and hungry to come and eat.* (Continue in prayer)

Hymn: I greet there, O my Lord (verses 4-5) 543

Communion

Prayer following communion

Holy, gracious, God, Here at this table your promise of life is made tangible. We have rested in the depth of your love; We have tasted your nourishing, nurturing presence; We accept you into our bodies, into our lives. Together, at this table, you have offered us life. Together, by your grace, we accept the life you offer. And we give you thanks. (Joanna Harader)

Hymn: For the bread (verses 1-2) 549

Go now from this service of worship to the service of God's people near and far, refreshed by the living water that Jesus offers to you. Listen for the parched voices of the least of these; search out the dry places and the arid souls, and become for them a spring of living water. And as you go, may the blessings of the God of life, the Christ of love, and the Spirit of grace be upon you this day and forevermore. Amen.