

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of Saint David March 10, 2013

REAFFIRMING THE COVENANT



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: *Lent is a time for going into our rooms in secret and letting the searching love of God clarify our hearts and minds, and purify our words and actions. In a few minutes of quietness now you are invited to go to your personal inner room and to be present to the God who is present to you. Don't work too hard at praying, or examining your conscience. Simply let yourself be present, and let your God look at you. If you find distractions coming, then it may help you to imagine Jesus kneeling alongside you in that inner space, offering prayer for you. (silence)*

Hymn: Nothing can trouble

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Prayer of Confession: *God of covenant, when our wilderness journey ends and 'normalcy' returns to our lives, remind us to look back and see where you carried us through, deepened our faith, and provided us with your loving care. At such a time as this **Reaffirm your covenant, gracious God.** Holy Spirit, when suffering is the result of our own sin, inspire us to turn around, ask for help, accept your forgiveness, and live a new life in your grace. At such a time as this **Reaffirm your covenant, gracious God.** Holy Spirit, Reconciling God, in Christ make us a new creation, by forgiving our sins and sending us out with a mission to be your ambassadors of love, peace and new life. At such a time as this **Reaffirm your covenant, gracious God.** Almighty God, hope beyond hope, love beyond understanding, forgiver and forgetter of our awful sins, wait for us in patience, but needle us with the memory of your loving self, your loving home. At such a time as this **Reaffirm your covenant, gracious God.** Lord Jesus, as you told parables in order to make the gospel clear, put us in a story of your choosing, and bring us to a deeper faith in you. At such a time as this **Reaffirm your covenant, gracious God.** We pray for those who need to be reminded that there is healing in your presence, and homecoming, because there is a home.... at such a time as this **Reaffirm your covenant, gracious God.** From every wilderness day, Good Lord deliver us. **Amen.***

Hymn: O Jesus I have promised (verses 1-2)

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Scripture **Joshua 5:9-12** The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Continuing the Conversation In Joshua 5 there is the sense that the Lord is beginning again with a new generation of the people. A new generation now in the Promised Land makes a fresh commitment to the Lord. With the return to covenant allegiance came the restoration of Israel in the eyes of the Lord ("This day I have rolled away from you the

disgrace of Egypt.’, v. 9). Once more the people bore the sign of allegiance to the Lord, which was the complement of freedom from slavery to an oppressor. They are ready to make decisions as God’s people. Verse 10 makes it plain that the rite of circumcision is related to the second ritual observance mentioned in this text, the celebration of Passover – both these rites were signs of the covenant made with Abraham and Moses. The two rituals are now practiced for the first time in the Promised Land, and in such a way that draws their past stories together. Since the people left Egypt, the Passover ritual had not been observed. In the wilderness, the only ‘bread’ available was the ‘manna’ provided by God. Now that they were in the land promised to them, they had grain to make unleavened bread. Through these two rites, the people could celebrate their freedom and reconciliation with the Lord in a great feast of thanksgiving as they reaffirmed the covenant. The Passover was now to be celebrated as a commemoration of the Lord’s rescue of the people from bondage. Moreover, the land that gave Israel the grain to make the bread for the Passover, had been granted to them by the Lord, the fulfilment of that promise long ago. The Lord provided the means whereby the people could celebrate and mark their release from captivity. Verse 12... Through repenting their disobedience, they had eventually been led back ‘home’. When they awoke the next morning, the disappearance of the manna was a reminder that all along they had been led and fed by their God. (and here is the connection with the Prodigal son).

Hymn: O Jesus I have promised (verses 3-4)

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Intercession Let us bring to mind now those people who are in need of our prayers: those who are ill, or anxious; those who are lonely or sad; those who are despairing or defeated; those who are hungry or homeless; those whose relationships are breaking apart; those who are bullied or abused; those who cannot find work; and those who are over-worked. In silence now, let us make our own specific prayers for those on our hearts and minds today. (silence) In the presence of God, alongside Jesus Christ, with help from the Spirit may we go into this week to live out our prayers through our lives.

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

Hymn: I’ll love the Lord (verses 1-2)

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Prayer of Thanksgiving: *The Lord is here. God's spirit is with us. Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise.*

For forty years, you fed us with the bread of heaven in the wilderness. Now we stand on the edge of the promised land, giving thanks that you have rolled away the heavy stone of our shame.

(Continue in thanksgiving) *Send your Spirit, O God, upon your holy people, called out from the world and gathered together, and upon these holy gifts, fashioned from the fruits of the Earth, revealing here and now the living and saving Presence of Jesus Christ with us, within us, around us, and among us. Empower us to share together in your mission, showing your love and justice in all we do.*

Hymn: I’ll love the Lord (verses 3-4)

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Communion

Prayer following communion

Gracious God of life, we thank you for this supper shared in the Spirit with Jesus, and with all believers, and all creation. Send us out, empowered and energized by your Body and Blood, that we may witness in all things to your saving love that fills all things. Amen.

Hymn: God be in my head

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May the love of God surround you as you go out from this place, and return to your daily life; May Jesus Christ always stand before You with an invitation to know him and to follow him; May the Spirit give you wisdom and grace for the journey, and kindle your imagination; And may the love of this community be like a warm cloak to shield you from despair and keep you strong in hope.