

EXODUS 24:8-18

THE TRANSFIGURED COVENANT

“Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you.” What is this covenant that Moses speaks of, and does it still apply? Just before our text Moses “took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”” (v. 7). Just before that in verse three “Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.””

What are these words that the Lord had spoken that the people said they would do? Well to answer that I would have to read you the Book of the Covenant, which spans from chapter nineteen to twenty-four. Five chapters of words from the Lord. You can read them at home if you’d like.

As these chapters begin “Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”” (19:7-9).

How do you think that believing forever is going? How long do you think the people did what the Lord had spoken to Moses? To give you an idea of how well this all went I’ll let you know that chapter twenty includes the Ten Commandments, and when Moses came down the mountain after his forty day and forty-night stay that our text ends with the people were worshipping a golden calf.

The people didn’t keep this covenant with the Lord their God for very long. In fact they went and found a new god in the form of a golden cow to worship. How are you doing with doing all the words that they Lord has spoken? Do you feel like a failure, like God is going to give up on you, like God has given up on you? Maybe it’s not just you, but it’s the whole world that God has turned His back on. That’s how many people feel. That’s one of the many false teachings about God, that God created us and then left us on our own.

The feeling that God has abandoned us comes from our sin. We’ve sinned too much, turned our back on God, gone our own way, and God has stopped chasing after us. That’s how many people feel, but that’s not true.

Think about when the book of Exodus was written. That was about 1400 years before Jesus. If after over a thousand years of people breaking God’s commandments, and turning away from God, God still hadn’t turned away from His people, but rather sent His Son Jesus to them, do you really think

that God would turn away from His people, from you, in the two thousand years since Jesus became a man and died for your sins?

He hasn't! Jesus has promised that He will always be with us. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" – Matthew 28(:19-20).

As we go and make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them about what God has commanded us Jesus is with us always, to the end of the age. Jesus isn't with you until you mess up by sinning too much. Jesus promises past generations, our generation, and future generations that He is with us always to the end of the age, to the end of time, until He returns again.

People may wonder how that works, because this covenant that we read about today, that the people said, "We will do it! We will do it! We will do it!", well they broke it in forty days! So, if the covenant with the Lord that He will be our God and we will be His people has been broken how can we be sure that God is still with us until the end of the age?

Well, it always comes back to Jesus. He's the one who repaired this broken covenant, and it works today based on what He has done, and not based on what we do or fail to do.

Before our text Moses threw half of the blood of a sacrifice against the altar. Then in our text Moses took the other half of the blood and threw it on the people. This was called a ratification ceremony, ratifying this new covenant between God and the people, and it was never repeated again, in the Old Testament. It was broken in the Old Testament, but then the people in the New Testament unintentionally renewed it.

"When Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to be crucified" – Matthew 27(:24-26). And so Jesus' blood was poured over them, their children, and on us.

How do we know that the blood of Jesus is the blood of the new covenant? We know this because Jesus tells us so. "Jesus took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." – Matthew 26(:27-28).

The blood of this covenant will be poured out again on you today when you receive Holy Communion and the blood of Jesus. God will again say to you that He is your God and you are His people. And God will again forgive you of all of your sins for the sake of His Son Jesus who was sacrificed on the cross for you. The blood that was shed on the cross pays for all of your sins. And when you partake of Holy Communion you are reassured of that forgiveness. This is now your ratification ceremony where God ratifies with you that He forgives your sins.

On this Transfiguration Sunday when we often focus on Jesus glorified up on the mountain with Moses and Elijah and three disciples looking on, I wanted to show you the other side of Jesus' glory, not all brilliantly white, but bloodied and dead for you. The disciples wanted to build tents and stay up there in that glory. We like to bask in glory too. We choose to avoid suffering. But we cannot always avoid it. We have to face the hard times of our lives, just as Jesus had to face the hardship of the crucifixion.

Our Old Testament lesson also shows us glory with some people seeing the glory of God and eating with Him, but then again it opens up with blood being thrown on the people. It includes the reality of life in that as Moses went up the Mountain, he went to get the law and commandments from God. We're reminded that God has laws and commandments that we break. This covenant of the Old Testament was broken almost immediately, and so we have to look to the New Testament to see how it was fixed.

The author of the book of Hebrews lays that out for us, telling us that "when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (9:19-22).

And so for us to have the forgiveness of our sins Jesus was sacrificed for us and shed His blood for us in this New Covenant. Jesus also rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and will return again to judge the living and the dead. God does so much more transfiguring than just of Jesus on a mountain. God transforms your lives by joining you to the death and resurrection of Jesus through Your Baptism. There God intersects with your life and makes you one of His children. And now by faith we can trust that God is still here working in our lives even when we cannot see Him, but in Holy Communion we can have His blood of forgiveness poured into us again. Amen.