

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: Worth the Wait

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- This section of Jeremiah is described as God's new covenant with Israel. Prior to this section in chapter 34, verses 1-14 demonstrated that Israel will be God's people; verses 15-26 shows us that God will have mercy on Israel; and verses 27-30 shows that God will watch over the people to make them secure.
- Verses 31-34 say, "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.
- I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord, 'because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,"
- declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
- The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible says, "Jeremiah proclaims that whereas in the past the hearts of the Israelites were inscribed with sin, now a new covenant will be written on those hearts. In such a case the metaphor of writing on the heart suggests a context of revelation: God's law will be revealed by Israel as they live out its principles."
- God's new covenant with Israel will replace the older Mosaic Covenant by: (1) this new covenant will not be broken the same way the Mosaic Covenant was from Israel's sinful nature and lack of faith; (2) God would place this new covenant directly on the people's hearts; (3) The new covenant people will know the Lord and will be counted as God's own people; and (4) the new covenant will be eternal!

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- “When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.” – Jimi Hendrix. We must ask ourselves: what happens when we harness the power of love? What happens when we make love actionable? What happens when we take seriously our Christian covenant of love?
- In today’s text, Jeremiah appears to be resistant to be called by God and a mouthpiece to the masses. He must be thinking to himself “can’t someone else do this?” God convinces him and commissions him to go and spread holiness across the land.
- In doing so, Jeremiah saw the worst in humanity across the land. The setting of this text was during one of the darkest of times of the Babylonian exile. The images of devastation bring to mind the current reality we see every day around the world.
- Jeremiah 31 is speaking of these themes of pain and heartbreak. There is a sense of hope that God gives the people in Jeremiah 31:31.
- The new covenant has been interpreted by Christians as the prophecy of the New Covenant through Jesus, but here it refers to the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian exile and the reconstruction of the Temple.
- Jeremiah is proclaiming that it is not so much about the content of the new covenant that will be different, but *how* it is to be lived out!
- How we live out our covenant can change everything. We will know the teachings of God and be changes internally by them.
- “Beloved”: Be.love.d: go forth and be love in the world!
- John Wesley travelled to America and saw the evils of corruption and sought to influence the people through “holy living”. Wesley dreamed of a revival of holiness that “creates community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfill God’s creational intentions.”
- Today’s service is known as the “Covenant Renewal Service” that was instituted by John Wesley in 1755. It is this idea that when we focus on our covenant to each other, we bring our purpose and mission back into focus.
- As we go into this new year, remember that we are God’s beloved. We are Wesleyan and called to go out and be love for the world.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Compare the New Covenant with the Mosaic Covenant given at Sinai. How are they similar? How are they different?
- Why do the people of Israel need a new covenant? What reasons does Jeremiah give?
- How does this passage in Jeremiah of God's promise of a New Covenant relate to the coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament?
- How can you live out your faith? In other words, how might your faith find tangible expressions in our community/world?
- What commitments will you make in this new year to put your faith into action?

