

March 11, 2021

Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Genesis 9:8-17

Ephesians 1:3-6



Selected Verses:

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever. – Psalm 107: 1

“I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth...I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

– Genesis 9: 11, 13

God the Father destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. – Ephesians 1: 5-6

Devotional:

The first foreign language I learned was German. I took five years of it in public school. Each year during high school, we would go on a field trip to German restaurant where we only allowed to speak in German. I knew that I had learned the language when I started dreaming in German. Years later, when we hosted yearlong exchange students, I noticed a difference in their language when they started dreaming in English. There comes a moment when you stop translating from one language to the other. You simply speak the language.

When we turn to the Bible, we read the words in English, but they are in a different language than we are used to speaking. And yes, I think we miss something by not reading in the original Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament), but this is not what I am talking about. There are simply some words that we do not use every day. One of those words is “covenant.” When we enter agreements with others, we use words like deed, lease, or legal contract.

In Genesis 9, we hear the first use of the word covenant. God makes a covenant with Noah. Later, in the Old Testament God will make a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Israel. In his commentary, Gerhard Von Rad supplies a biblical definition of a covenant: “a covenant is meant to clarify and intricate or opaques legal situation between to groups or individuals, in that it puts the relationship of the partners on a new legal basis.” Before the covenant with Noah, God and humanity were in a broken relationship. God is pure and holy. Humanity is evil and corrupt. The covenant is redefining the relationship and putting it on new ground.

So, what changed? Definitely not humanity. Within a chapter, Noah and his sons display the evil of humanity. Part of this is pointed out by the covenant. In the covenant with Abraham and all other covenants, the individuals or the nation was called into a relationship or fellowship with God. If the people would uphold their end of the covenant, God would uphold His. In the covenant with Noah, God is not only making a covenant with Noah, but with all creation. Further, God is not requiring anything of Noah.

God simply stated, "I am setting up a covenant that I will never destroy the earth and all that is in it. I will put a rainbow as a reminder for me of this covenant." God makes an irreversible commitment that God's future dealings with humanity will be completely different than before. In the end, what has changed is God. God has made a decision about the grief and trouble in His own heart. God will have a new relationship with humanity and His creation.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us that this change of relationship comes to completion in Jesus Christ when God destined us for adoption. Not only is God's heart changed to no longer destroy us. God's heart has changed as a Father to a child. This is not because of anything we have done. We are still sinners. It is what God has done through Jesus Christ. It is for God's good pleasure. It is out of God's grace and love. God has established a new relationship, a new covenant with us in Jesus Christ.

In response to this covenant, as adopted children of God, we are invited to live within the household of God. Our actions are in response to God's grace. We are invited to clean up and come to the banquet within the house of God. It is a free gift that God has offered. God has changed his relationship to us, and invites us to live in right relationship with Him and one another.

Prayer:

Almighty God, we are thankful that you have adopted us as your children through Jesus Christ. You have called us to live as children of the covenant, in a new relationship with you and one another. Please forgive us when we sin. Forgive our anger and resentment. Forgive our unwillingness to live into this new life you have freely offered us. We give you thanks that your steadfast love endures forever. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.