

"And I, when I am lifted up"

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor

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Fifth Sunday in Lent, 25 March 2012

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 119:9-16; Hebrews 5:5-14; John 12:20-33

"This is the covenant I will make with them, says the Lord God. 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.' " (Jer 31:33)

Lent is a journey... (said Cath last week)

let me focus on the journey that we have been on through the Old Testament in these last few weeks a journey that will bring us up to Jeremiah today.

We started with
the Noahic covenant..

<grin> I just wanted to drop in that word "Noahic"... it might be useful to the Palethorpes of any other family with a young Noah around!

This was *covenant* was the agreement god made with Noah.

Noah faithfully went and built the boat and loaded the animals and floated on the flood.

[it might have been the Black Sea newly flooded as the Mediterranean coursed through the Dardanelles and Bosphorous... but that's another discussion. --- many peoples have stories of floods. Sea level rises are possibly behind these stories. How meaning is put into them is another issue.]

So Noah did what was required of him, and God did stop the rain ... eventually... (after forty days! are you finding forty days of Lent long? How much longer it would be if it was to be raining, all day, every day!)

The rain stopped, and the rainbow appeared, and god used the rainbow as a sign of god's promise to never again destroy the earth with the waters... "the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. when the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember...." Gen9:15,16)

Then we came to the Abrahamic covenant. This is the one I want to preach on next year! please??? next year's reading on Lent Two has the Ancient Near Eastern covenant ceremony. which is truly weird... a wonderfully strange reading....

This is a ceremony (it may never have actually been used) when the animals are cut in two, and the partners to the agreement walk through them. "May it be to me like these animals if I do not fulfill my part of this agreement...." Abraham falls into a deep sleep. He does not walk between the animals. But God does. God takes on the responsibility.... more next year

but not this year...
God says to Abraham (this year)..

"walk before me and be blameless..."

and god's side of the agreement is to give to Abraham and Sarah a child, a son,
one who will give rise to nations:

"kings of people shall come from her [Sarah]"

Then the journey gets harder.

In the next two weeks we had the ragged band of *Habiru*, Hebrews, fleeing their slavery in Egypt, seeking refuge somewhere, stuck in an Exodus that lasts forty years!

and we had Moses, coming down from the mountain with the tablets of the Law.

The reading from Exodus (Lent 3) is the Ten Commandments. A strong statement of what we should be doing in response to this god.

"I brought you out of Egypt I am jealous god, punishing those who reject me, showing steadfast love to those who love me and keep my commandments."

Last week the Numbers reading was really a background for the gospel reading (last week's and also to some extent to today's.)

It goes back to the wandering in the wilderness. ...

no food,
 no water,
 and the snakes!

Forty years they wandered, not just forty days! forty years!

 and the bronze serpent was lifted up, set on a pole, so that the people might live....

Last week's gospel in John chapter 3 has "just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up..."

(This week: "and I, when I am lifted up from the earth; will draw all to myself" indicating the kind of death he was to die.' John 12:32)

so now let us come to this week.

to Jeremiah.

A new covenant
 a new agreement

not a code of law that must be obeyed;
 not a restriction
 a setting of boundaries not to be crossed

But a way to be more fully human

 a new covenant
 a new agreement

a NEW RELATIONSHIP

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, ---
I will be their god and they shall be my people. ...
they shall all know me."

they shall all know me.

James Allison speaks of us as being:
spoken into being by someone who loves you (ABC's Encounter) a god who loves us...

Who is this God,
this god lifted up?

Hebrews says of Jesus,
of 'The Christ'

"You are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek."

Jesus, a descendant of King David...

Mary and I were looking at/ reading through the first chapter of Matthew on the day the Dinka
Bor Bibles arrived.

I could hold on to the names in the genealogy (some of them)

then one sprang out! Melech David

Melech: King David. *Melech* is Hebrew for KING

(I have wondered if Martin Luther King's grandfather knew that. I am sure that he did, and
hence chose that name, those initials for himself or his son. MLK melech, king,)

Melech is Hebrew for King (and Dinka also)

Melchizedek in the Hebrews reading today is a king.

the King of Tzedek?... no, *tzedekah*... king of righteousness.

and this king is earlier than David

Melchizedek was someone, a priest to whom ABRAHAM paid tithes!

the writer of the Hebrews says:

"You are a priest according to the order of Melchizedek"

an ancient and mysterious origin.

Our reading points us to the need for us to be mature --- to be skilled in the 'word of
righteousness' ... to distinguish good from evil....

Who is this GOD
 this Jesus who is lifted up?

My Lenten journey started with noticing the words in the Ash Wednesday service about Jesus...

He was fully human

fully human

now in this full humanity he will experience it fully ---

 lifted up
 to draw all to himself

to die his death. To live fully he experiences the suffering and grief.
 Vanstone writes in this poem (which we will soon be singing in hymn 174)

Drained is love in making full,
 bound in setting others free,
 poor in making many rich,
 weak in giving power to be.

Therefore he who shows us God
 helpless hangs upon a tree;
 and the nails and crown of thorns
 tell of what God's love must be.

Here is God: no monarch he,
 throned in easy state to reign;
 here is God, whose arms of love,
 aching, spent, the world sustain.

 William Hubert Vanstone

here is God, whose arms of love,
 aching, spent, the world sustain.

so now, we set our face, [like flint] to go on this journey (with him) to Jerusalem in these last two weeks of Lent.

Thankful that we have with us a god who knows what it is to be fully human and a god who takes upon god's self the burden, the responsibility of this covenant, this relationship.

A god who leaves for us this meal.

this eucharist to give us strength on our journey to tread the path of being ourselves fully human, with all its griefs and sorrows and suffering and joys and loves and passion,

to tread the path set out for us.... each one of us...

Amen.