

Immanuel, 16th October 2022
Jeremiah 31; 27-34 Luke 18; 1-8

Remember no more

God of the dispossessed, you teach us to hunger for justice even when the weak are shut out and the powerful turn over in their beds: in the heat of our anger and the bitterness of our complaints, give us the courage to protest, the persistence to pray and the heart to love; through Jesus Christ, the true judge. Amen Prayers for an inclusive church

I chose the “Thought for the Week” in Weekly News today for two reasons – the first, because it made me smile by pointing out the obvious: *To some people a tree is something so incredibly beautiful that it brings tears to the eyes. To others it is just a green thing that stands in the way.*” (William Blake). The second reason, because I thought it summed up both the Bible readings for today – to God, we who are God’s children are not a green thing that stands in the way, we are something incredibly beautiful. And because we are incredibly beautiful, God will go out of the way to do all that can be done for our life to be a better life.

In the case of Jeremiah, it is the new covenant, no longer written on stone, but on our hearts. In the case of Luke, the judge though is not the nicest person will do something good, even if he would prefer not to, and does help the woman who has insistently pleaded for justice. I will come back to this in a moment.

I have always been surprised by the final words in the reading from Jeremiah. I don’t know about all of you, but for many years I was supposed to believe that, by definition, God was immutable -that is, unchanging over time. And if there is one thing I began to discover was that immutable God was not... God chose to a change of mind on various occasions, not least in this wonderful reading of Jeremiah: *for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.* If love is what leads us then changing our mind is part of life. And God loves us.

One of the most memorable times where God expresses a will to change can be found in the dialogue with Abraham (Gen 18) when seeking a way forward for Sodom; in Jonah chapter 3, or when in Dt 23 the Moabites were not to be allowed to dwell with God’s people, but then Ruth the Moabite appears, and she is also included in the list of Jesus ancestors -not bad for a person who would have been excluded. Or when eunuchs were not allowed (again Dt 23) but in Acts 8 the African eunuch is welcomed into the church, and what about Jesus’ parable on the Good Samaritan, when they were the despised group. God is willing to go a long way for the healing of the people. In Jeremiah it says God will “**remember their sin no more**”, which is not necessarily the same as forgetting, though it is the way to forgiveness.

God provides a new covenant, not cast in stone, like with Moses, but engraved on the heart -a palpitating, living reality, and today when we celebrate Communion we will also refer to a new covenant, in bread and cup, for the forgiveness of sins.

What God expects for us, is that we don’t give up – as the parable in the Gospel today. A judge who *‘neither feared God or cared about men’* and this widow who keeps coming back with her plea. As a widow, she has no one to speak for her, and finally she exhausts this indifferent judge down, and she is granted justice. Not that the judge cares – on the contrary, he is just fed up with her. So God, who does care, and is not like this judge in any way, will bring justice to those who call on God with their case.

God is willing to renew the Covenant, so many times that I cannot keep track, the first time is after the flood so early on in Genesis (chs 6-9) and sets a rainbow as a reminder (does God need to be reminded?), and again at the Last Supper. God is compassion (comes from Latin and means "suffer together") and love will be stronger than stone, and the tablets of stone.

So when we look at the illustration in the Weekly News today, remember all about God and compassion – our heart and our brain working together, remembering as William Blake said, we just don't stand in the way, we are beautiful to God. And God in forgiveness and love chooses to remember no more and reconciles us to each other and to God. And that in Communion once again, we come face to face with the NEW covenant. And though we do not use the word Eucharist, just a reminder that it means "being grateful;" and for all this we are grateful, so we should go and share this in our life. Amen