

“New Covenant”  
Exodus 19:1-6; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26;  
Luke 22:14-23

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We've been going through the Faces of Jesus in this sermon series, following a Godly Play series. The idea is that we see Jesus in different lights, different faces, and the face of Jesus we are thinking about today is the one who gives the New Covenant.

Oftentimes as we read scripture, there are a lot of things in it, but the thing in common between the Corinthians passage and the Gospel we read today is the idea of the New Covenant. I want to think a little bit about what it means to have a new covenant, or a new promise.

When we think about the idea of a covenant, an agreement that's made, we do this in a lot of different ways. If we take a job, we often sign a contract with our employer. And that is, in a way, a covenant. We recognize that that covenant changes our lives. It tells us where we're going to be during working hours five days a week, a lot of times, if nothing else. It engages us in a new way of doing things in a new place.

The other example of a covenant that I thought about was the marriage covenant and the way that we enter into a covenant with someone else in a marriage. It changes our lives, how we spend our time, how we spend our resources, the nature of our intimacy. All kinds of things change because we enter into that relationship, that covenant. So we think about the idea of how a covenant changes us because we are entering into a relationship that we agree to be in.

When we think about covenant, it's a theme throughout scripture. It starts way back with the Noah covenant, where God gives us the rainbow and says that contrasts with the gods who will destroy the world. God is a God that will not destroy the world. Then he has a covenant with Abraham where God promises that Abraham's progeny will be a people who will show God's way. And then there's what we might call the covenant with Moses and his people that's more about setting up a law, a way to go, helping them to set up a society and a culture that's based on law. It was a milestone in the development of humankind. We still use law as a basis for our culture.

As Steve led the scouts today in the Scout Oath and then as we think about the Scout Law, these are ways of describing what it means to be a Scout. As I remember it, it is one of the first things I learned as a Scout. I had to memorize the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. Those help show, or determine what somebody might expect to see in a Scout. As they become Scouts and encounter issues, they can turn back to the Oath and Law and say, "We say this about ourselves. This is how we want to solve these problems because we've committed to be a Scout in this way." In many ways I think the Mosaic Law was the same kind of thing. God was inviting them to commit themselves to being a certain way together.

The trouble is, we sometimes struggle with living up to our commitments. We sometimes struggle with being the very thing we said we wanted to be. So that's

basically why Jesus came, because we struggle living up to and being the thing we want to be. Jesus came to offer us another kind of covenant.

The Mosaic covenant shows us the limits of what we want to be. What Jesus wanted to do was to invite us into the center of who we want to be. Think about it this way: As you become a Scout, you learn the Scout Oath and the Scout Law and you can go back to those and you can think about them, but it's hard to have just a few words that really engage. My guess is that what really engages a young scout is an older scout, a scout who is beginning to live it out and to show what it means to be a Scout. That's the importance of older Scouts in Scouting.

I think that's what Jesus is doing with the New Covenant with us. His coming is noted in 1 Corinthians as it talks about Jesus being the last Adam, and in Colossians 1:15, the firstborn of all creation. He's being the older brother. He's being the one ahead, the model, the guide showing us the way. He's inviting us into that relationship with God, being the one leading us. Oftentimes we can think about that and how as he creates this new covenant at the table with his disciples, how it's both something that involves us as individuals and us as a group. It's the very fact that he did this at the table with a group of disciples, making them into a new people, that was incredibly important. It was both an invitation to us as individuals to know the relationship that we have with our big brother, with our friend, and through him, with God and to know that we do this together, that we engage and become a community of faith, a new covenant people.

For me, one of the times for me that was most important in my life in recognizing this was when I engaged in a campus ministry. When I was at the University of Tulsa, I was part of something called the Canterbury Center. It was a little building and a little ministry, but it was a place where I found support. I found a place where I could be myself. I found a place that invited me to be part of a community where we would support and encourage one another, where we gave each other love and grace, where we helped each other begin to see in new ways and to test what we've learned so that we could be better people.

That was just one moment, but that's what I think we try to be together as we engage with what Christ invites us to do, to become the New Covenant people, a community of faith. The Scouts become a group that has a particular mission and guide, and they do so much. We do the same thing as we become the New Covenant people. We become a people who engage with the God we worship. We recognize the relationship of love and grace that God gives us and we recognize that we become a people that encourage, support, and give grace to one another, and that we are emissaries to the world on behalf of Christ.

It is an invitation from Christ to everyone. We can come and be part of that New Covenant people, a new community, and as we do that, we show the grace of God and we live into that new covenant. We are invited. Amen.