

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“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
..“For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”

A covenant is a deal – a handshake.

Australia is famous for handshake deals or covenants

Fair trading Australia sets out the rules for a legal handshake deal.

3 things:

- First, there must be an offer where one person offers an exchange – dollars, land, car, whatever.
- Secondly, there must be some form of acceptance, where the other person accepts the offer.
- Thirdly, there must be an element of “consideration”.
 - OK I’ll get back to you.
 - Ok ill check my bank balance.
 - Ok I’ll ask my wife first.

Some kind of consideration and then the shake – and it’s 100% legal deal or covenant.

Gina just sold 4 of her Kidman properties, for millions and millions, with a simple handshake deal.

Alan Joyce got the golden handshake - \$24 million just for retiring.
Bill Shorten said that was a bit over the top.

(Pic) Two men – well I think they’re men are shaking on a deal.

Who is shaking whose hand – and what is the deal – chocolate

In Jerimah the people lived under a covenant with God.

It was very practical, it made sense.

God said: You do the right thing by me – and I will bless you and keep you.

You do the wrong thing buy me and I will curse you and reject you.

These are the rules for you to follow.

If you can’t follow the rules, you can make it up to me - You can offer a sacrifice.

In other words, you can offer up something else to suffer and die in your place – an innocent lamb, goat, calf.

This is grossly, grossly, simplified.

But essentially you had to either obey the rules or make it up to God if you slipped up.

Now this system is up and running. 1000's and 1000's of lambs, and goats, and calves, are being killed to make up for the wrongs of the people.

Poor little lambs and goats and calves.

They even used Pigeons – but that's OK.

This is the system, the deal, the covenant.

Not a bad system if you only sinned once in a while like your grandmother.

But most people sin day in day out – every day they had to go through this deal.

In Jeremiah there is a hint of a new covenant.

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel...It will not be like the old covenant because [you] broke my old covenant...”

I will be your God,

and you will be my people.

“I will forgive your wickedness

and will remember your sins no more.”

As the terms and conditions unfolded, we find there's no hint of animal sacrifice.

In fact God's people discovered through Isaiah (53) that:

- “A son” will be slaughtered like a lamb.
- A son will be pierced for their transgressions,
- A son will be crushed for their sins;
- A Son will take on the punishment that brings peace.

We find in the new covenant that the law is not something to be obeyed – that's weird – **rather the law now reveals our sin.**

For example do not lie – becomes a way of pricking our conscience and helping us realise we do lie.

And there is the gospel – a confession and then the forgiveness of sins.

Do not hate – becomes a confession - I'm sorry Lord I have not taken the best actions with my neighbour.

The new law leads to admission – admission leads to forgiveness.

This new covenant relies on Jesus the lamb of God dying in our place – earning us forgiveness, making us right with God, ready for heaven.

Hebrews 9 we hear the old covenant required priest to kill – and shed blood – and burn offerings day after day.

There was no end to sin.

But: *When Jesus Christ came as high priest He entered the presence of God by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption for all people.*

For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died in their place to set them free from their sins.

Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many;

So a new covenant – Jesus does all, we receive faith and forgiveness and eternal life.

And every week we say it; Take and drink this is my blood of what? - **The new covenant** – given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins.

What a blessing – that God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only son - that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What a deal?

Now, hear this.

Despite this new and wonderful covenant – where God does all and we receive grace - the new church in Jesus day – somehow ignored the new covenant and preferred the old covenant.

For example, some leaders in the early church for example insisted on circumcision even though it was redundant – it belonged to the old covenant.

Why?? – no need.

Some people in the new church insisted the people still eat according to the old covenant.

Why?? – there is no need for that anymore.

Remember the sheet – Peter take and eat the mettwurst.

The new covenant of freedom, of grace, of God, faded and the old covenant of obedience reigned.

Why – are people nuts?

It got to such a point that the church made new rules of obedience – grace was lost.

In the extreme case the church insisted:

- That people paid for their relatives to go to heaven
- That people paid hard earned cash to have their sins forgiven
- That people made amends to God according to the priest:

Say 10 hail Marys.

Say a hundred hail Marys and give your life to the church

There seem to be no end to conditions put on ordinary people by the church to have their sins forgiven.

These are people who could not read the scriptures by the way – very convenient.

Jesus said “go and tell” - the church kept the scriptures under lock and key

It seems the church leaders kept the old covenant alive – it made them very, very rich – go to Europe and see the gold plated churches.

In 1517 Luther read - *we are forgive freely by Jessus – through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. – by his stripes we are made right with God – freely.*

He had read it a thousand times - but at last God made him hear it.

And there we have the reformation - Luther proclaimed in plain German.

Romans 3:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ

Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

The people had never heard this – Jesus had died for them and they never had heard that he did it for them – because he love them.

With in weeks this was out there – in every language – the language of the people.

Along with verse from John 8: *if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

This is the new covenant – the beginning of the reformation of the church.

We need to celebrate this today.

1517 years after Jesus had died and brought freedom to the world God's ordinary people hear it for the first time.

The Pharisees, the church leaders, stopped them from hearing it.

I believe, if it were not Luther it would have been someone else – because God would not have his church in the dark for ever, he would not have Jesus die for nothing.

Why 1517 years I don't know.

Why not sooner, I don't know.

Today we celebrate 1517 – the New Covenant uncovered and released into ordinary people's lives – in their own language.

You know I go to a lot of funerals – so do you – I see you there.

I hear strange things - on the hospital bed – planning a funeral.

- I hope I get to heaven.
- Uncle Bill was a really good bloke.
- Aunt Mavis worked for the church all her life.
- Granpa Jack gave this land for the church to be built on.

It seems deep down our default is to go back to the old covenant of works – do the right thing and God will bless me.

And deep down we still think that a good honest, hard working person could or should go to heaven.

That's the old covenant thing.

The old covenant is still out there – in the church - in you.

We need a reformation every day – a reminder that Jesus died for us, if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

It is by the grace of Jesus we have been saved.

We need a reformation every day so that our good works are works of thanks.

Believe me even in 2024 most people out there go by the old covenant.

They believe church is about serving God and giving their money.

How can we tell them otherwise.

Jesus says: *Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*"

We are people of the New Covenant made right with Jesus blood – let's love it.

How dare the leaders, the bishops and the popes, keep it hidden for 1517 years.

In a moment you will be invited to receive the blood of the new covenant.

I pray you hear those words anew.

Luke 22:

After supper Jesus took the cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.

This is not juice, not covid in disguise, this is the pure grace of God poured out for you to bless you, forgive you, to give your faith and eternal life

Denied for 1517 years – given to you freely. Amen.

Lord reform us very day – lead us away from a life of trying toward a life of relying. Help us life of love that leads people to Jesus' grace and love. Amen.