

The Covenant

Exodus 24:3-11

Holy Thursday, April 1, 2010

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Would you like to see God?

Kind of a strange question to ask a bunch of people who gave up their Thursday evening to be at worship. Of course we want to see God. But we have heard that there is a little problem with seeing God. Moses wanted to see God's glory. God told Moses that no one was able to see His face and live. Apparently God was still willing to allow Moses to see something of Him because He put Moses in the cleft of a rock, put His hand over Moses and showed Moses His back. Moses saw something, but Moses did not see God's face. Now if we are going to see God, we don't want to die. Sure we would love to see God, but we really aren't interested in dying.

Would you like to see God without dying?

All it takes is a covenant. All it takes to see God is a covenant. If you have a covenant with God you may see Him. If you do not have a covenant with God, you will die if you see Him. All it takes is a covenant.

When God establishes His covenant with you it involves three things. First of all it involves His words. Second it involves a sacrifice of some kind. Thirdly it involves your commitment to do what His words tell you to do. With those three things in place you will have a covenant with God that will enable you to see Him.

What then are the words with which Jesus establishes His covenant with you? They are very simple words. You hear them all of the time at church. The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and Saint Paul write: On the night when our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, He took bread. And when He had given thanks, He broke it and He gave it to His disciples and said, "Take, eat. This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me. In the same way also He took the cup after supper and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me."

The words are carefully collected from all of the records that we have of the covenant which Jesus made with us. The words come from Matthew's record. They come from Mark and Luke's record. They come from 1Corinthians 11. 1Corinthians 11 are the oldest recorded words of our Lord, so the oldest recorded words of our Lord are the words which establish His covenant with us. Sometimes it also called a testament.

The first ingredient, the words, are present. They are present every time the covenant is observed.

The second thing is a sacrifice. Whenever God establishes a covenant there must be some kind of sacrifice. When God established His covenant never to destroy the earth by flood again, Noah had just offered a sacrifice. When God established His covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai Moses had the young men of Israel offer sacrifices. There seems to be a need for a sacrifice when the covenant is established.

Jesus offers His own sacrifice when He establishes His covenant. Jesus does not offer bulls or goats. He offers Himself. He offers His body to those who would beat it. He offers His body to those who

would strip it. He offers His body to those would strike it and spit upon it. He offers His body to the nails. He offers His body to the spear. He offers His body to the thorny crown. He offers His body to the cross.

Jesus offers His blood. His blood flowed from His side. It flowed from His wounds. It flowed from His hands and from His feet. Jesus offered His blood.

It is upon the sacrifice of His body and His blood that Jesus establishes His covenant. This sacrifice is the mighty hand of God. The sacrifice of Jesus is the mighty hand of God. He has ransomed us with a mighty sacrifice. He has ransomed us from sin and death and made us to be His people with a mighty sacrifice. He has drowned the forces of Satan and cast them out of heaven with a mighty sacrifice. He has saved you with a mighty sacrifice.

He has established His covenant.

All that is left is for you to keep the words of the covenant. In order to keep the words of the covenant all you have to do is listen to them and do them. It is your commitment to the covenant. It is your commitment to Jesus. You do what He says to do. You follow the commandments that are outlined in the covenant. You obey the commandments that are outlined in the words of the covenant. When you do the covenant is fulfilled.

There are precisely two commandments in the covenant which Jesus establishes with you. There are two great commandments which He gives to you in His covenant. The first one is, "Take, eat." The second is like it, "Take, drink." Do these two commandments and the covenant is fulfilled.

Once the covenant is fulfilled you will see God. You will behold the God of Israel. Under His feet is sort of a green carpet. Behind Him is sort of a rock wall. You will eat His body and drink His blood and you will behold the God of Israel.

Going to Communion is as good as going to heaven. The only thing that makes heaven a great place is that Jesus is there. He is there in a way in which you may behold Him. That is what makes heaven great. That is why one of our hymns says, "Yea, heaven itself were rude and bare if Thou Lord were not near me." What the hymn is getting at is that heaven is really a useless place unless Jesus is there. Since Jesus is here in His body and blood and you may see Him, you are as good as in heaven right now. You are as good as in heaven right here. You are as good as standing there with Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu gazing into the face of God Himself.

And the best thing about Communion is that you look at God and He does not raise His hand against you. He forgives you of your sins. He does not blast you with His power. He does not vaporize you with His holiness. He does not zap you for your sins. He does not damn you for what you have done. He does not lift one finger against you. In fact when you eat His body and drink His blood He is the one who is vulnerable. Just like the Roman soldiers of old you may do what you like to His body and His blood and He will not resist you. You may drop it on the floor or spill it and He will not send His hand against you.

And so the covenant of Jesus is established. Come up here. See God and eat and drink.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.