

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,^[a] says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: 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. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Neighbors in Christ,

Greetings to you, my friends in the Risen Christ. I write to you this month as the temperatures are falling and the winds are blowing, but our farmers are still out in the fields and may still be there for a few weeks more. Harvest is within reach, and there is so much to be thankful for. Towards the end of the month, we will sit around a table and share in a meal of thanksgiving where we look back at our true blessings of the year, and forward for more of the same.

This is one of the reasons I chose this text from Jeremiah for this month's devotional – and it all comes down to God's continued love and covenant with God's people. Love continues to abide in and through us, and God is always with us. We often forget that in our day to day lives as we go about our work, our play, and even in our spiritual selves.

God's renewed covenant allows for forgiveness of our wrongdoings and forgiveness of our sins. Fellow theologian Tim Christensen sums it up best by stating, "Notice the future tense in the Jeremiah passage: "I WILL make a new covenant," "I WILL put my law within them," "I WILL write it on their hearts," and "I WILL remember their sin no more." What are you celebrating? Is it a remembrance of the past or is it a hope for one future? Perhaps we need both more than we can know. After all, the Lord has given us a past, a present and a future, each with its own unique purpose."

This new covenant was not written on stone tablets, but on our human hearts instead. Humanity was given an opportunity to depend on something new and looked to something else other than ourselves. God, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, told Israel what to do and provided them an opportunity to look to something greater. This pointed to Jesus Christ. The Son of God opened the possibility not only to know God as never before, but to also have their sins dealt with once and for all. This gave them a fresh start because the promises made from God were given to all.

Yes, we honor the past with tradition and identity, but as a parish, we must continue to look forward and adapt in ways that may be unfamiliar. But I truly believe that God's love and the work of the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us forward into the new year, and far beyond. And as Christensen writes, the Lord has given us a future and we each have our own unique purpose in that. We are called to love and serve one another as the example Christ has given us. And when the Day of Thanksgiving is upon us, let us remember who we are, where we are called, and that we have each been named through our shared baptism by a loving and forgiving God. Enjoy your November and I'll see you in worship.

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish