

February 28, 2021 (Focus: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Second Sunday in Lent)

God's covenant with humanity doesn't make sense, and maybe that is the point.

Contract: agreements, often where things of value are exchanged, usually fairly even; employment contracts, buying a house or car,...

Covenant: also an agreement, but uneven. God: give you descendants too many to count until eternity, father and mother of nations and kings; giving them all they desire offspring. Humanity: we will try to be your people, emphasis on try. (Yoda quote)

Doesn't make sense, on God's part, so why? What does this covenant the God offers Abraham truly hold? What is its source? What does it represent?

Parenting (another sort of covenant)—uneven...you are my child, I will care for you, support you, teach you, love you. Covenant is confirmation of what is already there (love, we are family, we are connected)

Marriage (another sort of covenant)—wedding vows are confirmation of what already there (love, devotion, dedication, uniting of lives)

Covenant—confirmation of what already there; but what is there? Our God connected to our souls, our true selves. CS Lewis once said, we do not have a soul. We are a soul. We have a body.

Our life then is just the time we take to figure out how to truly and fully live into the connection already there, how to live into the deep and abiding soul connection we have with God

But not just about abiding soul connection we have with God. Where Abraham and Sarah struggled. They accepted the covenant with God, but somehow didn't see that each of us individually connected with God means we are connected with all that God is connected with, so we are all interconnected: all humanity, all creation, all that God loves interconnected as our souls connect with God. Our covenant with God is also our covenant with others. So when Sarah and Abraham use Hagar when they don't yet trust God's covenant, they have not yet learned that Hagar is part of God's covenant too, and their souls are connected with her.

Us helping others—doesn't make sense; every person for themselves. Random acts of kindness: what if no one ever reciprocates? Why would I do it without such a guarantee? Our giving our treasure to help another, our giving our taxes to help school another or give another a decent road to travel on or our giving our treasure to help someone else to eat or have shelter or fix their house after a disaster, for some these make no sense. Doing something like putting up solar panels so that we save natural resources now in order that there be natural resources for some future generation we will never know, for some this makes no sense.

“My brother asked the birds to forgive him: that sounds senseless, but it is right; for all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending; a touch in one place sets up movement at the other end of the earth. It may be senseless to beg forgiveness of the birds, but birds would be happier at your side –a little happier, anyway– and children and all animals, if you yourself were nobler than you are now. It's all like an ocean, I tell you. Then you would pray to the birds too, consumed by an all-embracing love in a sort of transport, and pray that they too will forgive you your sin.”

– **Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov**

But we live in covenant with one another and all creation and we live in covenant with past and future generations. We live in covenant with others that we welcome to the table, as Jesus taught us, not requiring some admittance test, not only welcoming some, but showing us that when we welcome in his name, our souls are connecting with other souls, all loved by God.

Us helping others—our soul connected with other souls already, being revealed in word and deed

“Everything you do is connected to who you are as a person and, in turn, creates the person you are becoming. Everything you do affects those you love. All of life is covenant.

Imbedded in the idea of prayer is a richly textured view of the world where all of life is organized around invisible bonds or covenants that knit us together. Instead of a fixed world, we live in our Father's world, a world built for divine relationships between people where, because of the Good News, tragedies become comedies and hope is born.”

– **Paul E. Miller, A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World**

Covenant: Noah, Abraham & Sarah, Jacob, ..., Jesus...now us

Covenant initiated and established by God, but demands a response by humans to guarantee its validity

Children's: Will things get better? Yes (after flood came rainbow and dry land; after slavery in Egypt Moses freed and after wilderness came to promised land; Jesus healed those who thought things wouldn't get better

Gracious and loving God, we bring to this time our whole selves. We bring our joys and concerns, we bring our doubts and desires, we bring our deepest sense of hope to this time. We are grateful for this encounter of the holy, for this sense that we breathe in your spirit, we become one with your spirit, and our spirits are refreshed and renewed. Awaken our soul's eye to seek such glimpses of the holy in our daily lives; we suspect you are with us, as your steadfast love endures forever, so can endure and make new even such a time as this.

We struggle with the sense of time in our lives: when will things get better? When will we be able to reconnect in person, when will we be able to do the things we like to do, when will things be easier, when will healing come, when will pain end, when will answers come? We wonder why our timetable never seems to correspond with the universe's, and we wonder, even as we believe you are a merciful God, why your timetable sometimes seems so different from ours. Grant us wisdom, grant us patience, grant us courage, grant us understanding, for the living of these days. Grant us hope, a blessing for every day, for every moment, especially those lived in the interim.

Ever Gracious God, pour out your love and your healing powers upon us, and upon all those in need of healing in body, mind, and spirit. Grant all in need an experience of your renewing compassion and care, especially...

Bless all those who have lost loved ones to this virus plaguing us now. Bless all affected with compassion and a sense of hope, that soon our efforts will turn the corner on this pandemic.

Moment of silent meditation...

Gracious God, grant us love in our minds and in our hearts, love for ourselves and love for all. We trust that you intend love for us, for we have heard it in the words and seen it in the actions of our teacher and spiritual guide and savior, the one we call messiah, who taught us to pray to you, saying, Our Father...