

**PENTECOST:
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

**Reformation Sunday
October 25, 2009**

**Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 46
Romans 3:19-28
John 8:31-36**

Behold the New Covenant

Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant; this covenant was unlike the one that was given in the wilderness—the law with its rules and regulations written in stone. No one kept nor could ever keep those laws. By the law's very nature, it could not restore our relationship with God and with one another. It was broken down through the sin of disobedience in the garden. The law, therefore, because of the sinfulness of our hearts, could not restore us to the Father.

Because of our sinful nature, quite often we seek loopholes in order to avoid punishment or to justify our behavior. The history of the Hebrew people points this out very clearly. The law was not enough, so the people built a hedge around the law by making more and more laws to control behavior. Each law was intended to make us obedient to the will of God but, in every case, our sinful nature would find a way around obedience. This is not the foundation upon which good relationships are built.

Jeremiah doesn't promise us a day in the future when God would repair the law. God's intended use of the law worked quite well. In fact our obsession with trying to dig out from under the law is proof that it was working according to the plan of God. The law was given to convict us of our sins. It was given to make us uncomfortable, to make us squirm.

When confronted with the law, we have only two options. We either continue to look for loopholes or we confess that we are sinners lost and without hope under a system which said obey and live, disobey and die. Herein lies the hope of the new covenant that Paul makes clear to us in the book of Romans. God's righteousness is revealed apart from the law for it comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ. Although we all fall short of the glory of God, we are made righteous by God's grace.

The law condemned us all, but Jesus paid the price for our sin through the shedding of his blood on the cross and procuring our redemption. What the law could not do, the grace of God freely did for us. We are all sinners, but because of the new covenant we have been redeemed. Our relationship with the Father has been restored, not because we keep all

the rules but because God loved us so much that he sent his Son to die that we might have eternal life.

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. David Haberer, Pastor of Church for All Nations which reaches out to the world from the heart of New York City. Visit: www.CFAN.net to learn more about this ministry. Pastor Haberer is an ordained minister with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

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On this Reformation Sunday, we remember to pray for the Church and for the Holy Spirit who renews the Church in every age. We pray for faithfulness to remain steadfast in God's Word and with thankfulness that God's Law is written on our hearts.

Activity Corner: "Covenant Hearts"

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2" x 11" construction paper; heart pattern; markers, pens or pencils; scissors.

Read together Deuteronomy 5:1-22 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. Covenant is another word for agreement. What promises are given in these passages? What verses point to God's faithfulness? Discuss the difference between having God's Law written on stone tablets and having God's Law written on one's heart. Invite everyone to trace and cut out a heart from a sheet of construction paper. On one side of the heart, copy Jeremiah 31:33. On the other side, encourage each one to write a promise they wish to make to God as a way demonstrating their covenant relationship with God. Conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving for God's faithfulness and by singing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" or one of your favorite hymns.