



Service for personal use – 21st March 2021.

Call to Worship.

Create in me a clean heart O God and put a right spirit within me.

Hymn. 1 StF, 1 H&P, 20 MP “A people that on earth do dwell”.

Opening Prayer.

O God, our loving Heavenly Father, we want to acknowledge again that You are the great God of wonders,
yet only a prayer away. We want to thank You for the many presents of Your promises and the keys to open them. Make us ready to do great things in Christ’s strength and for Your Kingdom. Bless us as we continue in our preparation and journey through Lent, as we emphasize the spiritual side life
We come to You accepting that there are sometimes things in our lives which are wrong, so if that is the case, please forgive and renew us. We pray in Christ’s name.
Amen.

Responsive Reading 811 StF (Psalm 51 vs 1 – 11).

Hymn 272 StF, 162 MP “From heaven you came, helpless babe”

Bible readings

Jeremiah 31 vs 31 – 34, this is the well known reading we always use at the Covenant Service, of which I shall speak about later.

John 12 vs 20 -33, Jesus shares about his death and his anguish about it.

Hebrews 5 vs 5 – 10, the writer describes the situation in Gethsemane and the unique quality of Christ's priesthood.

Message.

In the Bible there are many covenants. The meaning of a covenant in plain language is an "agreement" between two parties, but this is not totally accurate. A covenant is where one party makes most of the effort and the other responds to it. I will come back to this later.

One of the first covenants in the Bible comes after the "Flood", with God and Noah. Before this, God regrets he has made humankind and decides to destroy the earth, but then it says, "but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord". As you know, God saves the animals and Noah and his family, after which God makes a covenant, to the effect that he will never destroy the earth again, the reminder of this will be the rainbow. Noah's response was to continue to be faithful to the Lord, (Genesis 9 vs 1–17). The second covenant is the one made with Abraham, where God says, "If you will walk with me, your descendants will be a great multitude, the reminder of this covenant will be act of circumcision. It is interesting to note that Abraham believed God and was thus made righteous, this is a forerunner of the New Covenant. The next covenant I share with you is the one made with Moses, this is based on the 10 Commandments and

Israel's response to them. This covenant is important because the whole of the Old Testament reflects this. So God says, "If you obey my commandments, you will be blessed, if you disobey, you will be punished. This concept is described well in Psalm 1, the person who keeps the law will be like a healthy tree, but the person who does not keep the law is like the chaff and is blown away. This covenant failed because it only served to show people how sinful they were. For instance, before the law was given, people knew it was wrong to steal, but when God said it was wrong, plus the fact it was written in stone, it just showed it was even more wrong.

The last covenant I share with you comes from Christ and his death on the cross, this is called the "New Covenant" and is the foundation of the Christian faith. This covenant Jesus says is "sealed by my blood for the forgiveness of sins". The basis of this covenant is a person's faith in Christ's death, not of keeping the law. As it says in Romans 5 verse 1, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" and in verse 8, "but God commends his love to us, for while we were sinful people Christ died for us", So our response to this New Covenant is that we love one another, when we do this we show the world we are Christ's disciples.

Romans 13 verse 10, "Love does no wrong to anyone, that's why it fully satisfies all God's requirements, it's the only law you need". So we fulfill our part of this covenant by responding to what God has already done. The good news is God's supreme love for, not just loving as a whole, but also loving us as individuals. As the Apostle

Paul says in Galatians 2 verse 20b, "I believe in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me". Amen.

Hymn 242 StF, 1 MP "A new commandment I give unto you".

Prayers of intercession.

Living God, we trust You to answer our prayers, according to Your will and the richness of Your love for in Christ.

We pray for those who struggle with their faith, through self doubt, difficult circumstances and being led astray by others.

We pray for people who feel they are in the dark, locked into a situation, where they can find no answer. We ask that they might come to understand that You are the key to everything they need.

We pray for ourselves when we are in difficult situations, times when we try to unlock doors that are not ours to open, when we don't focus on Your Kingdom, when we don't share our story. Please give us a fresh vision of Your wonder and Your will. We pray these our prayers in Christ's most worthy name. Amen.

We say the Lord's Prayer.

Hymn 277 StF, 173H&P, 478 MP "My song is love unknown"

We say the "Grace". Amen.