

GREETINGS

If you have your Bible we are going to read Hebrews 8.
(otherwise verses on screen).

Last week we looked at Jesus as our Perfect High Priest.

In case you missed last Sunday and to refresh our memories
...

Jesus as High Priest serves as our guarantor.

You need a guarantor when you have no capital or
reputation to get what you need on your own.

Jesus is our guarantor so we could have a relationship with
God.

**This chapter further explains what a relationship with
God is.**

Let's get at it.

Hebrews 8:1-13

1 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, **2** a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. **3** For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. **4** Now if he were on

earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

6 But as it is, **Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.** 7 For if that first covenant had been **faultless**, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

8 For **he finds fault with them** when he says:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when **I will establish a new covenant** with the house of
Israel

and with the house of Judah,

9

not like the covenant that I made with their fathers

on the day when I took them by the hand to bring
them out of the land of Egypt.

For **they did not continue in my covenant**,

and so I showed no concern for them, declares the
Lord.

10

For **this is the covenant** that I will make with the house
of Israel

after those days, declares the Lord:

**I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.**

11

**And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.**

12

**For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.”**

**13 In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first
one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and
growing old is ready to vanish away.**

I’m sure you noticed the repetitive use of the word
“Covenant”.

Covenant is one of those Bible words that seems really
important ...

**Like it deserves a hearty Marine ‘oorah’ every time it’s
said.**

I grew up in church knowing of the word, but it was always associated with Israel's ark of the covenant.

Which to me was a “big bad battle box.”

Everytime Israel took the ark of the covenant out of the Holy of Holies it won battles.

That's a fairly straight forward military strategy.

But Covenant isn't about being victorious and quarantined holy rooms.

Covenant is about relationship.

In fact ...

Every Important Relationship You Can Have Is Bound In A Covenant

Marriage is the most obvious example for us today.

Every wedding you attend you hear that phrase “the covenant of marriage.”

B/C its two people taking their relationship to the next level.

It's taking it out of the realm of casual dating & puppy love.

It's binding two people together in love as one.

This is a great picture b/c it points to the fact that Covenant cultivates intimacy b/c its rooted in love.

Not romantic love ... committed/faithful love.

We have to learn to reject the idea that intimacy only means sex.

I think that's why we don't see friendships as Covenant possibilities.

But it's definitely a Bible category.

1 Samuel 18:1,3-4

1 As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.

There is nothing erotic or romantic going on here.

This is Covenant language...

Two souls being knit together.

Covenant unites ... it creates an unbreakable bond.

That's intimacy.

It shares lives and robes and armor and swords and cars and your DeWalt hammer drill ...

When we welcome in Partners to One Harbor Church we say, “What’s in my fridge is yours and what’s in your fridge is mine.”

That’s Covenant language.

And that is how you and I are meant to belong to a church.

It’s more than just showing up ... it’s Covenant.

Hearts knitted together ...

One Heart = Unity ; Two Hearts = Disunity

It’s not like man invented the concept of covenant to up our relationship game.

It actually comes from God.

He is a covenant community of three persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Yet b/c they are so united in purpose and love for each other they are ONE God.

Covenants foster love and unity.

It creates an environment of rich blessing and joy.

Your deepest friendships are covenant brothers or sisters.

Covenant makes you family.

All of God's relationships are built on Covenant.

This is what you see in the Bible.

The Covenant he made with Adam & Eve was one of blessing and purpose.

“Fill the earth ... multiply it ... have dominion over it ...”

He gave them all the food they needed ...

He came and met with them.

But in that Covenant He also placed a demand.

Don't eat from ONE Tree in the whole garden.

And this is the nature of God's covenants ...

Along with those blessings come demands.

Which might be why we avoid Covenant relationships.

Covenant Blessings Come With Covenant Demands

We see this again when God brought Israel out of Egypt.

He stopped at Mt Sinai and made a covenant with them.

This is the pattern of God saving sinners.

He delivers ... he demands ... then he dwells with them.

God saves us ... but before He dwells with us ... He defines the relationship with Covenant demands.

So at Sinai He covenants with Israel and gives them the law (demands).

Actually, he gave it through Moses who came down the mountain with the law.

Which is why in the Bible, that law is often called the law of Moses.

Moses was the mediator.

He brought the covenant down to the people of Israel.

These laws gave specific instructions of what it meant to be God's covenant people.

God defined it not man.

Hebrews 8:3-5

3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

We see the phrase "according to" repeated.

God gave his people a pattern and commands to follow.

It's easy to get so caught up in the rules that you forget why they are there.

God didn't give them b/c he wants us to fail.

His law was meant to create an environment of love.

And that love was meant to flow **vertically and horizontally**.

Later as rabbi's studied the law of Moses more intensely they saw two major categories emerge:

1. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength.
2. Love your neighbor as yourself.

The law wasn't about legalism ... it was about love.

We often get that wrong B/C we don't like demands placed on us.

It seems opposite to what love is about.

But that is a counterfeit version of love that our culture has created.

Think about it in our own relationships.

When you get married you put demands on yourself...

- I'm not going to date other people anymore.
- I'm not going to prioritize everyone else at the expense of my spouse.

- I'm not going to put my hobbies before my family.
- I'm not going to leave when things get tough.
- I'm in this no matter what until death do us part.

Those are good demands we place on ourselves when we covenant in marriage.

Do those sound legalistic?

Or do they seem good and necessary to create a safe environment where love can grow?

See, that's a major difference between a covenant and a contract.

Covenant relationships pursue love at all costs.

Contract relationships provide a way out when it costs you too much.

And when you take a relationship outside of covenant you reduce it to a contract ... it becomes transactional.

And when a relationship is transactional there are no safeguards or commitment keeping you in it.

It's like my relationship with AT&T.

They give me cell phone service.

But if a better deal comes along... I'm gone.

If it starts costing me too much ... I'm gone.

I'm not sticking with AT&T until death do us part.

That's a transactional relationship.

You're only in it while it still benefits you.

Which is why they start easy and end easy.

But Covenant Relationships are different.

They are entered into carefully and soberly.

Like Elvis' song, "Only fools rush in."

When it comes to relationships the wise don't rush in.

Now, that doesn't sound right to us because our culture values romance over commitment ...

And intensity over endurance.

So we tend to rush into relationships without counting the cost.

Jesus isn't a big fan.

Luke 14:27-30

27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is

not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

Jesus is affirming what the whole Bible says ...

A covenant relationship with God is the most important relationship you can have.

It comes with the most incredible blessings and promises ...

But there are demands ...

Unfortunately, he doesn't make it as easy as possible.

He doesn't lower his expectations of us.

God is holy ... he wants us to be holy too.

Which makes his demands really really good.

But it also makes them really really hard to keep.

God's Demands Are Good, But Impossible To Keep

When you and I fail ... we like to shift the blame.

It's a nice tactic to avoid responsibility for wrongdoing.

Adam did that with Eve ...

God it's not my fault that I disobeyed you ... Eve talked me into it.

The classic "The devil made me do it." deflection.

I enjoy observing kids playing group games.

If there is a rule that is causing one of them to lose they will campaign to get it tossed out.

[followed by arguing & it devolves from there]

They are doing what we do best ... shift the blame.

I'm not the problem ... it's that dang rule.

We are no different when it comes to God's rules.

I can't keep that rule ... or don't want to keep that rule...

So let's get rid of it.

Let's reset the boundaries God created for us to live in.

We try to find fault with the rules, when actually we are the problem.

Hebrews 8:7-9

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

Wait ... is God saying the commands were bad?

Hold on ... let's continue reading ...

8 For he finds fault with them [Israel, the people] when he says:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,

when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel

and with the house of Judah,

9

not like the covenant that I made with their fathers

on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

For they did not continue in my covenant,

and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

The Bible is divided into two main sections: The Old Testament and New Testament.

That word Testament actually means Covenant.

So the Bible is divided up by the Old Covenant and New Covenant.

The Old Testament is centered on the Old Covenant God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai.

The whole of the Old Testament is telling the story of God keeping that covenant faithfully, and Israel failing again & again.

But God didn't blame the Covenant he made.

He finds fault with Israel...

They couldn't continue in the covenant.

They couldn't keep its demands.

And here's the thing ... there were curses, not just blessings, connected with those demands.

Not B/C it gave God an excuse to let off steam like an abusive dad.

He put in those curses to get Israel's attention and call them back into keeping the covenant.

But Israel was hard-headed and kept breaking the covenant. This isn't because they had some unique character defect.

Its meant to show us that on our own we can't keep the covenant.

This is where God finds fault with the first covenant: As good and perfect its laws are ... it can't keep us.

So God says I'm going to establish a new covenant to replace the old.

Hebrews 8:10-12

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,

and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

11

And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.

12

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more."

Here's the big difference between the Old and New
Covenants.

We Don't Keep The New Covenant, It Keeps Us

See, in the Old Covenant the law came down from Mt. Sinai
through Moses...

But it always existed outside us ... apart from us.

Which is to say it didn't change our hearts ... it just
diagnosed them.

And our hearts have a sinful will that is contrary to God's laws.

So we often disobey them and go our own way.

The common refrain of the book of Judges is "everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

If your heart is so corrupted beyond repair what is your hope?

It's not medicine or stints.

You get a heart transplant.

That is what God does when He saves us into the New Covenant.

We get a heart transplant ... whole new heart.

And on this new heart is written all is good laws.

This new heart is now informed and delighted in God's ways.

I like that imagery of God putting his law into our hearts and writing them on our minds.

It's like they are permanently tattooed.

Now this will be fully realized when Jesus returns or we die and go to heaven.

But until then we are on a trajectory of surrendering more of our will to God's will.

More of our ways to God's laws written on our hearts.

Which means we are slowly being changed to ...

- Love God more with all our hearts ...
- And love our neighbors as ourselves ...

We need to be reminded that it doesn't happen all at once.

And it's not always pleasant.

This change is a God's slow work over a lifetime.

Our job isn't to force it to happen faster.

God will transform you.

But it's the patient work of slow progress.

Sometimes that work will feel painful ... like getting a new tattoo.

But that's how God often works... it's in the trial and suffering that he tattoos some of his most beautiful truth on our hearts.

Too often we leave the tattoo chair b/c it's too painful or takes too long.

But God will bring us back to it again and again to finish that work on our hearts.

The New Covenant Keeps us because it changes our hearts and minds.

But even more than that it's B/C Jesus is the mediator of This New Covenant.

Hebrews 8:6 "...Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as **the covenant he mediates** is better..."

In those days a mediator did much of what mediators today do.

A mediator stands for both parties ... not just one.

A mediator's job is to reconcile and bring peace.

But in that old world a mediator had the power to do something else ...

A mediator (or mes-ee-tace in Greek) could guarantee the performance of all the terms stipulated in a covenant.

Which is to say, the mediator could take all the covenant obligations on himself on behalf of either party.

If he was able to perform the requirements he could guarantee the covenant.

This is how the New Covenant keeps us.

B/C Jesus is our mediator.

That is why we don't have to live in fear of losing our salvation when we sin.

The New Covenant isn't guaranteed on our performance. It's guaranteed on Jesus' performance.

And when we do sin, God's mercies flow toward us and washes them away with the blood of Jesus.

God the Father, looks at us through Jesus our Mediator. He sees Jesus' righteousness, obedience, holiness ... all the Covenant demands perfectly kept.

And on that guarantee He comes to dwell with us in an unbreakable, faithful relationship built on His love.

AS RYAN COMES UP ...

I want to give us a chance to respond...

How is God leading you to respond today?

If you aren't a Christian ... coming into this New Covenant comes simply by faith in Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins and rose again.

If you are a Christian ... continue to put your faith in Jesus, the mediator and guarantor who keeps us in this New Covenant.

LET'S PRAY

COMMUNION:

The guarantee of this New Covenant is captured in communion. [Body & Blood]

This is a meal for those in the New Covenant

It is our proclamation that by faith in Jesus we shall remain in it.

Let's eat and drink together with thanksgiving for what Jesus has done and continues to do for us.