

The Covenant of the Coming Lord: I Will Give You Rest  
Mid- Week Series  
Jeremiah 31:1-9  
December 2, 2015  
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Dearly loved by God in Christ Jesus,

You came this evening to enjoy a time of rest. That is one of the reasons for mid-week Advent worship. It is the reason for our regular Sunday morning divine service. We gather at the oasis of God's Word to rest from our labors. We drink of the living Water, Jesus Christ. This water refreshes and restores our spiritual energy.

We fully expect and enjoy that rest, as well as hope and joy, because of God's covenant with us. It is **The Covenant of the Coming Lord**. Pastors Bishop, Schmoller, and I will be sharing this covenant as God lays it out in the first 25 verses of Jeremiah 31. We begin with verses 1-9. **The Covenant of the Coming Lord:** I will give you rest. It is a rest the LORD initiated. It is a rest the LORD sustains.

This is one of the most beautiful prophecies in the Old Testament. It applied to the nation Israel as Nebuchadnezzar's armies carried the nation away to Babylon. It applies to the New Testament church as the Holy Spirit gathers us who are by nature at enmity with God to give us rest in the Lord's covenant of undeserved love. With that double meaning the LORD declares, "At that time I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they will be my people."

On that day, the watchmen would call the remnant to return to Zion, the hill on which they would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Their going up to Zion would be their going up to the LORD God. On the day the Lord called us into faith through the Word of Christ, he called us to him. They and we find favor in the desert of absence from the Lord. We escape the sword, our enemies, as God keeps his covenant, "I will come to give rest to Israel."

The Lord initiated the covenant to give us rest. Why? God speaks, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel."

God's love for us is without beginning and without end because that is who he is, everlasting love. One of my friends pastors Eternal Love congregation. I've always liked that name. Even after all sin, God looks on us in Christ our Savior as a pure Virgin. That puts our fearful hearts to rest. That love replaces enmity with rest. The Lord makes us his holy Bride. He builds us up as his Bride with love just as the Lord calls on human husbands to love our wives and build them up.

The covenant of the coming Lord does not waver. He has not written it in pencil or erasable ink. He has written it in the blood of Jesus Christ, the blood of that new covenant we drink weekly in the sacrament. The covenant of the coming Lord is steadfast and true. God seals his covenant with an oath; an oath he swore on himself.

The Lord God promised Israel not only a return from exile but rest from their sins in the coming Savior of the new covenant. The Lord promises us that rest in the Savior who came into the world through the door of a manger in Bethlehem.

The coming Lord not only initiated this rest. It is a rest the LORD sustains.

We see that the Lord sustains this rest. Look at the actions of the people who have that rest. Jeremiah saw the day when the people would sing and dance and make music to the LORD.

They would go about the daily tasks of planting vineyards and reaping the fruits. They would do all these things at rest with God through their Savior.

This came to pass even in the north where the Assyrians had earlier taken the ten tribes into captivity to disappear forever. The Lord had not abandoned the tribe of Ephraim, the son of Joseph. The nation split in two after Solomon but the LORD would reunite all his people along with the Gentiles into one great spiritual nation.

Because the Lord sustains this rest, all are safe. The Lord would gather and take care of “the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor.” They would be a part of the “great throng” that will return.

Doesn't this remind us of Jesus' ministry? He cared for the salvation of the blind and the lame. He loved them. Jesus was a good, healthy baby in Mary's womb to take care of her. I had a discussion the other night about Jesus' delivery in the manger. Did Joseph have to help? Was there a midwife or the inn keeper's wife who helped? I believe while it was a natural childbirth with all the pain that comes with it, the Father watched over his Son's birth so all would be well. God protected Mary when she gave birth to his Son.

The Lord sustains us in our rest in the Savior. That rest from sin and guilt makes us weep; not with sorrow but with joy. That rest moves us to offer prayers of thanksgiving and praise as the Lord brings us back and keeps us in him. I wonder if David had in mind verse 9 when he wrote Psalm 23 about the rest the Lord sustains in our daily lives as we go about our tasks. “I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble.”

God says, “I am Israel's Father and Ephraim is my firstborn son.” God is our Father. We are his firstborn. The Father promised rest. The Son invites, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” [Matthew 11:28] This is the covenant of the coming Lord. Amen. <SDG>