



Celebrate

Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 21, 2021

God promises Jeremiah that a “new covenant” will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all the people to know God by heart. The church sees this promise fulfilled in Christ, who draws all people to himself when he is lifted up on the cross. Our baptismal covenant draws us to God’s heart through Christ and draws God’s love and truth into our hearts. We join together in worship, sharing in word, song, and meal, and leave strengthened to share God’s love with all the world.

Prayer of the Day

O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading

The Judeans in Babylon blamed their exile on their ancestors, who had broken the covenant established at Sinai. Here the prophet looks to a day when God will make a new covenant with the people. There will be no need to teach the law, because God will write it on their hearts.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the

house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

²Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my offenses,

and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment. **R**

⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my mother’s womb.

⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me, and would have me know wisdom deep within.

⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;

that the body you have broken may rejoice. **R**

⁹Hide your face from my sins,

and blot out all my wickedness.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,

and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation

and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. **R**

or Psalm 119:9-16; refrain, Ps. 119:11 [not printed]

Using priestly imagery and references to the Old Testament, the author explains how Christ lived in trusting obedience to God, and so God has made Christ the source of our eternal salvation.

Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;
as he says also in another place,
“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of
Melchizedek.”

⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications,

with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel

John 12:20-33

Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover festival. Here Jesus' words about seeds planted in the ground turn the disaster of his death into the promise of a harvest in which everyone will be gathered.

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

You wash us through and through and remember our sin no more. Make your church a community of forgiveness throughout the world. Give your people courage to forgive; through them show the world new possibilities. Bless ministries of repentance and reconciliation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You fill the earth—from tiny grains of wheat to the mighty thunder—with your presence, and you call us to attend to your will for all creation. Grant weather that prepares the soil for seeds; protect all from violent storms, flooding, and wildfires (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You promise to write your law on our hearts. Guide citizens throughout the world to shape communities that reflect your mercy, justice, and peace, and give them creativity to work for

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Jonathan Edwards, teacher, missionary to American Indians, 1758) Psalm 119:9-16. **Tuesday** Acts 2:14-24. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, 1980) Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23. **Thursday** (Annunciation of Our Lord) Luke 1:26-38. **Friday** Philipians 2:12-18. **Saturday** Jeremiah 33:10-16. **Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday** Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philipians 2:5-11; Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39 [40-47].

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the welfare of all. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

You sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Restore the joy of all who need to know your presence: those who are lonely or feel unforgivable, those who need healing of mind or body, those who are dying, and all who grieve. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Jesus calls us to follow him in life and death. Empower this congregation in discipleship. Equip children and teachers in Sunday school, confirmation, and learning ministries. Give us your truth and wisdom and teach us to follow Jesus. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In the cross of Christ, your name is glorified. We praise you for those who have given us words to worship you (*especially Thomas Cranmer*). With all those who have died in Christ, bring us into life everlasting. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.