

Sunday 13th June 2010. 10.30am Communion.

BUILDING: OUTREACH: BELONGING X24.

Building with Promise continued. (Covenant)

JESUS SAYS, I WILL BUILD MY GATHERED PEOPLE (CHURCH) AND THE GATES OF HADES WILL NOT BE A BARRIER TO WHAT I AM BUILDING, Matthew 16: 18.

This meal holds together the followers of Jesus and builds more extensively the church of God; we are the people of God. Jesus wanted all his Disciples to eat this meal, remembering him and his clear teachings. ***Then he took the cup...Drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the (new) Covenant. Matthew 26: 27.*** He declared it to be a New(*) Covenant (one which he gave his life for) and he calls upon us to be ***Covenant Keepers*** – not covenant breakers. (Becca spoke to us last Sunday morning about the son who promised to do something but had no intention of keeping his promise. She also spoke of the son who refused to do what his Father asked but changed his mind and went and did what his Father asked).

(* According to the Letter to the *Hebrews* it is *new, second and better* – 9:15; 8:7; 7:22. The second part of the Bible called the New Testament just means the New Covenant).

God's Covenant Promise. Every time we eat this meal at the Table of Jesus we are remembering the Promise of God and renewing our promises to him as individuals and as the people of God. God is faithful and will not break his Promise but we are fickle by nature and have to learn faithfulness. We need to learn to keep our promises and be honest with one another about our real degree of commitment to Jesus and his people. **The LORD has cut the Covenant** (obligation undertaken primarily by a single person) and he has never broken it, he has never been unfaithful and he continues to pursue his **PROMISE to make a new people out of all the nations of the world.** The promise is from God's side – the Covenant (diatheke) is God giving us a commitment – an inheritance for now and for the future.

This Covenant (this promise, this undertaking, this pledge) is by metonym (another name for) the same Promise that was given thousands of years ago to our forefather **Abraham**. God does not change his mind. God does not break his Promise(s). God works out his Promise(s) through the generations. We represent “one generation” – just a small period of time – just a small group of people – but God works progressively through the ages, through the generations. The Promise(s) given to Abraham are still being outworked now. (We need to gain God's time perspective and learn patience and endurance or we will be constantly frustrated & disappointed).

But in the coming of Jesus Christ the Promise (s) given to Abraham has potentially been fulfilled.

All the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20)

I spoke last Sunday evening at the Communion Table and said that the word PROMISE in Scripture is a legal term. It is an announcement of an undertaking to do/ to give something. It signifies a gift graciously bestowed and not a pledge secured by

negotiation. We haven't had to squeeze this out of God or "put God's in an arm lock to gain this. God has committed himself to freely give us a Promise and we have not wrung it out of him by some hard fought negotiation. God's promise is – all of grace!

Jesus himself spoke about the "Promise of God" and of course his first audience the Jews understood immediately what he was talking about. Jesus tells his Disciples that he will send what the Father God has promised. (*Luke 24: 49 and Acts 2: 33*). The people of God are to receive the Promise of God – the outpouring of God's Spirit upon them. It is Peter on the Day of Pentecost – the birth of the Church who declares to people of all nations; *This promise is for you, your children and your childrens' children – on as many as the Lord our God shall call* (*Acts 2: 38, 39*). The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that the whole of the Promise will be worked out – it will not only be partially fulfilled. (*Ephesians 1: 13 arabon – deposit or down payment, engagement ring*). And what's more the Promise is not short lived – *we have an eternal inheritance* (*Hebrews 9: 15*).

This Promise was made to Abraham and contains many elements but basically it is one single Promise: (it was one promise but variously repeated and unpacked by different prophets)

READ Genesis 13: 14 – 17. The promise is that God will make a people – his people from all the nations of the World.

In the New Testament Paul sets out that the Promise can not be received by our attempts to keep the Law of God but only through faith in the One who God sent – his Messiah- Redeemer Jesus. .
(Galatians 3).

We are part of that people of God:

We have already sung today that "*heirs to the promise are we*" (*An army of ordinary people – SOF 20, Dave Bilborough 1983*).

God has promised to make one people out of all the nations of the world. That people will be made up of those who believe that the Promise of God comes through Jesus Christ. He is the Promise. He pours out the Holy Spirit to give us that inner witness, that inner reassurance that we are children of God.

He calls us to eat this meal as a constant reminder (because we are fickle and forgetful) This is a constant reminder that God will keep his Promise – he has kept his Promise – he is making one people through his own Son, the Messiah- Redeemer. It is also a reminder that we are weak are like Judas prone to be *Covenant breakers* – prone to betray our Lord and Master and prone to fail one another and the world.

God is working out his Promise through the generations and will complete it but we need to choose to learn faithfulness and understand our part in building the people of God.

(Hallmarks of authentic people of God: Christo centric people, and marked out as a pneumatic and charismatic people – who love one another as Jesus loved us).

Response time: word brought by Neil to reflect on in silence.

**I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and
the Great Jehovah.**

Listen to what I say.

Do not strive.

Leave all your burdens with me.

**Stop all your hurrying and busyness and listen while
I speak.**

Listen to me.

Listen while I speak in the silence.

Listen, a voice that cries in the desert.

(Long Pause)

Those that have ears to hear - listen.

Those that have eyes - let them see.

Those that have open hearts - let them act.