

South Woodham Ferrers, 21 March 2021 – Virtual Service

Call to Worship: Jeremiah 31:31,34

31:31 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. ...

31:34 No 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.

[New International Version]

So let our hearts and our voices be lifted as we reflect upon God's unbroken promises to us.

Let us give praise to the Lord of the Covenant with heart and soul and voice.

Hymn 1: "Praise, my Soul, the King of Heaven" <https://youtu.be/i3dHeRB2c3g>

Opening Prayers

Father God,

We come to You humbly, acknowledging that we may only approach Your throne because You have opened the way and beckon us to come.

Lord of the covenant, Your promises hold strong and Your word is true, while ours are weak and falter often. Forgive us for the broken promises of our past days and help us to honour the covenant as we step into today and onward towards tomorrow.

Teach afresh the path to tread, lead us as we follow that we may someday be a leader for one who is lost.

In the Name of Christ our Saviour,

Amen

Reading 1: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Introduction: Is there really such a thing as a broken promise?

"A promise is not a promise once it is broken – then it becomes a lie and the only thing that is broken is the one who believed it."

I admit I break promises, not deliberately of course, but such accidents do happen and as humans we can have a tendency to wander through life with the attitude expressed by Jonathan Swift (poet and Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin) that "**promises and pie-crust are made to be broken**".

Another wordsmith reminds us, however, of the damage a broken promise can create:

Let us give thanks, therefore, that we have a forgiving God – a God who keeps His Covenant with us no matter how often we falter and come crawling back.



Hymn 2: "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" <https://youtu.be/WqOnjmr9Ah0>

Reading 2: John 12: 20-33

Reflection: The Cost of a Promise

This passage declares that the time is indeed coming when God will make His new covenant with His people; when the Law will be etched in our hearts, written with the permanent ink of Jesus' blood.

The disciples did not yet understand this, but in time their eyes would be opened; we too may struggle to understand when God is honouring His promise to us, when our prayers are being answered. For our prayers will be answered; it may just take us some time to understand God's plan and see those answers in the footsteps in the sand of life.



When you make a promise to someone who matters to you in life, you will make a special effort to keep that promise. We are fortunate that we really matter to God, more than we can comprehend. Will God feel that He really matters to you or me?

I know that when I look back in the sand I can see a long straight path marked by His footsteps and, alongside, a meandering track which drifts periodically from the way until ushered back onto the path.

I know I need to put more effort into keeping my promises, big or small – whether to put that card in the post, to get milk from the shop or to be there for Jane and for all my loved ones through whatever life brings. One unattributed lesson which I have stumbled across on this pathway towards Calvary is that **“People with good intentions make promises but people of good character keep them”**. I still have some way to go.

But the first promise I must remember, is the promise to listen to His voice that I might get to know Him better and understand His promises more fully. Until that time I have come across a summary to put beside my desk; I will put this on the next page in case you find it helpful and would like to print it. But remember this above all – you are loved and His promises to you are promises on which you can rest assured.

Hymn 3: “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” <https://youtu.be/DOXnzYPMhWY>

Closing Prayer:

Loving Lord,
Hearts will break and skies will fall;
stars will die but through it all,
we will reach for something above.
we are humans in love with Love.
(© John Mark Green)

God is Love, Amen

Hymn 4: “Great is Thy Faithfulness” <https://youtu.be/r4ox4es1jo8>

Blessing : Rest assured on the promises of a Faithful God and find the Peace that He offers.

GOD'S PROMISE

God has not promised
Skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways
All our lives through;
God has not promised
Sun without rain
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.

But God has promised
Strength for the day,
Rest for the labor,
Light for the way,
Grace for the trials,
Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
Undying love!

- Mandi Wilding

God's Promises are Forever!

Jesus Christ and His promises
are the same –
yesterday, today, and forever.
Keep the Lord's promises in your heart :

"If you call
----- I will answer.
If you open your heart
-- I will enter.
If you will be My child
-- I will be your God.
If you will love Me and be My friend –
I will come to you.
I will abide in you.
I will walk with you.
I will talk with you.
I will direct your path.
I will be with you always.
I will be your Savior.
I will be your Friend
--- **FOREVER!**

Heaven and earth will pass away,
but My promises to you will not pass away.
For My promises are forever, just as ...

I AM Forever!"

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