

Sermon Summary

5th Sunday in Lent

25th March 2012

- Jeremiah 31:31-34 asks for a reform of the way in which people consider their covenant relationship with God.
- In particular he challenges three ways of looking at the covenant
- For national identity. This was the idea of privilege that came from history. We suffer it sometimes appearing as “we’ve always done it that way”. For Jeremiah, covenant faith does not depend on clinging to the past.
- Sacrifice as insurance. The prophets deplored the idea that sacrifice could be used to pay off God for sins or errors committed, even repeatedly. For them, worship was a symbol of the relationship that should exist between people and God, not a means of by-passing proper behaviour.
- Covenant as law. Human beings love to make laws to guide behaviour. Consider the 26000 plus statutes in this nation! But it is possible to keep the law and not live well or right. For Jeremiah, covenant faith is more than not breaking laws.
- The covenant of the heart he suggests is described as being “written on the heart”. This indicates both its depth and quality.
- Jesus will follow in this tradition by describing faith as love, and asking people to believe in him, that is, to live in a right relationship with him.
- This indicates the kind of covenant faith which Jeremiah wished for his people.
- We all know instinctively the difference which living in love and love makes, and how much better it is than clinging to history, using insurance or living according to law.

25th March 2012