

Worship Material
God's new covenant
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 17th March

Begin with an opening prayer

As we gather, make us mindful of the wonderful variety of people and experiences in our church community, in our local community, in our nation and in the wider world.

Amen.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

Bible notes

Following their time in the wilderness, the people of God settle into the 'promised land'. Their success at living as God's people is mixed, with periods of faithfulness to God and periods when they go astray. Through the prophets God calls them to return to living their covenant relationship with God.

Close to 500 years after being set free from slavery, the land splits into two kingdoms, a divided people. A couple of hundred years later, having persistently ignored the warnings to turn back to God, the northern kingdom is captured by Assyria, the ruling superpower of the time, and is no more. Little over 100 years on, the much smaller southern kingdom is also ignoring warnings to turn back to God from, among others, Jeremiah. Jeremiah pronounces God's judgement on the remaining people of God, which will lead to their capture and exile at the hands of Babylon, the current ruling superpower. However, Jeremiah's message is tinged with hope and promise. After the judgement and exile will come restoration. When God's people, in exile, turn back to God, God will make a new covenant with them.

This covenant, described in today's reading, will be characterised by a close relationship with God. It will not rely on a knowledge of God mediated to the people by a few, or passed on through the stories of God's past interactions with them. It will be a new covenant, a covenant for this people, the current and future people of God. At its heart is the promise that 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (v.33). Some 500 years later, despite a return to God and from exile, the promise has not been fully realised and some of the people of God look for this being fulfilled in Jesus.

Prayer

A prayer of thanksgiving

Response after each line: **Thanks be to God.**

We sing praises to God:

For the richness and variety of life **Thanks be to God**

For the diversity of creation, earth, sea and sky **Thanks be to God**

For a multitude of animals, birds and fish in the seas **Thanks be to God**

For water to drink and quench our thirst **Thanks be to God**

For crops to grow and food to eat **Thanks be to God**

For ancestors, family, friends and neighbours, near and far **Thanks be to God**

For hands that have guided us and pointed the way for us **Thanks be to God**

For promises given and kept and beyond measure **Thanks be to God**

For the suffering and passion of Jesus for our sakes **Thanks be to God**

For the love of God within our hearts **Thanks be to God**

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Thank you, God, for each and every one of your amazing people, every one of them unique. We go out joyful, knowing that your love is always there for us and reaches to every place and part of the whole world, and all the millions and billions of people, in every generation. May that inspire and encourage us to be loving to all whom we meet in our day-to-day living.

Amen.