

God gives us the deal of a lifetime - **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation is from the First reading of today Jeremiah 31:31-34. Let us pray:  
“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, my  
Rock and my Redeemer.” Amen

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Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

As you know The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a treaty between Canada, Mexico and the United States. This is the world’s largest free trade agreement. These three countries agreed in 1994 to remove trade barriers between them. The deal was intended to eliminate most trade tariffs between the three nations, increase investment and tighten protection and enforcement of intellectual property.

On January 23, 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to renegotiate NAFTA. He said "We will be starting negotiations having to do with NAFTA." Eliminating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was crafted by former President Bill Clinton, was a frequent Trump campaign promise. At this moment there is re-negotiations about NAFTA among Canada, Mexico and the USA but until now there is no agreement among these nations in how the new NAFTA will look like.

We live in a world of deal-making. It is a way of life among countries, in business, in government, and even in inter-personal relationships. Offer and counter-offer are set forth; promises and guarantees are made; and finally agreement is reached that can affect might corporations in their mergers, that determine the relationship between you and the dealership where you buy your car, or which govern the simple relationship between you and your teens in terms of the use of the telephone or their evening curfew time. And everyone is always on the lookout for the best deal they can get.

In our text today, God speaks to us of the deal of a lifetime. ***“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with***

***the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.***

God's covenant with us is better than any trade agreement or collective bargaining agreement; it is greater than any offer by anyone, anywhere. It is, if you will, the deal of a lifetime, not only because it is the best offer that has ever existed, but because the covenant that God makes with us is the offer and assurance of life itself. God gives us the deal of a lifetime. He makes a new covenant with us. A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more people that lasts forever. The terms were clearly understood and were not to be broken.

The Old Testament idea of covenant was expressed as "cutting a covenant". Typically, the two parties in the agreement would solemnize their agreement by passing between the pieces of slaughtered animals, sacrificed for this purpose. As they walked, they would take an oath: "May it be so done to me if I do not keep my oath and pledge".

How different that is in comparison to the typical deals or agreements that we are used to in the world today. For one thing, the typical agreement or deal today is not as honoured or as inviolable as it was in biblical times. Contracts are often broken; warranties are violated as much as kept; agreements are forgotten or ignored.

Donald Trump says last year "We are going to start renegotiating on NAFTA, on immigration and on security at the border." That's what he or any other leader of the world can do when they think an actual agreement is not bringing his country benefits.

When we look at the covenants between God and His people, we see that while God always kept His part of the covenant, the people often violated the covenant. God was their God, but they often forgot that they were His people. At times they chased after the false gods and idols of their pagan neighbours, much as we, too, forget God and get too caught up in the things of the world. We know what God wants of us; His word and commandments make that very plain.

And yet we choose to go a different way. We break the covenant, even though God is always faithful to us. And since we do break the covenant, God would have every right to punish us, to let us be as those slaughtered animals, because of our attitude towards Him and His covenant with us.

That's why the words of our text today really are the deal of a lifetime. While God has the right to punish us for breaking His covenant, He chooses instead to make a new covenant with us. In His great love for us, God offers us life in all its fullness. Look at all that God promises to us.

First of all, He says: ***I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*** For the people of Israel, this promise assured them that God was with them, that He was their king. The same is true for us. God is the King of Kings. He governs all things for the good of His people. That is why the psalmist says, ***“Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.”***

Friends, God has a different agreement with us. He is our God. He promises us that He will be with us, to watch over us in every moment of our lives. He says that He keeps track of the very hairs on our head. And that surely means that He knows all the other things that affect us day by day, too. He is the one who knows how the declining job market affects our life. He is the one who knows how that growing tumour troubles our hearts. He is the one who understands the difficulties we are having coping with all the stress of life in this world.

And because He has made this offer to us, that He will be our God, He says to us: ***Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honour Me.*** God is our God. That means that we have the help, the protection and the guidance of the Almighty Lord of all at work for our good day by day. There is not one things that you and I have to face alone, because no matter what, our God will be with us to see us through.

God also promises: ***they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.*** God allows us to know Him; He sends His Spirit to help us know and believe in Him. There is an intimacy that God wants to have with us. He does not want us to see Him only as a great and powerful king, but as St. Paul reminds us, ***“those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.\* And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.***

When you and I deal with God, even under the covenant, we are dealing not with a distant king, not with a major corporation, who sees us only as a number, but we deal with our Father, the Father who reveals Himself to us as a God of love and mercy.

But best of all, God says in His covenant: ***“I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*** When it comes right down to it, this is the real wonder of this deal of a lifetime. By our actions, our words, and yes, even our thoughts, we continually break the covenant God would have with us. If we had to walk among the pieces of an animal lying on the ground and say, “May God do this to me if I should break my covenant with Him”, then what would become of us? We would be destroyed. But God has cut His covenant with us. He has sealed it in blood, the blood of Christ. And, wonder of wonders, God has taken the punishment we deserve, and placed it on His Son. Jesus is the one who is suffering for our covenant violations.

He is the one dying, even though He does not deserve the least of this pain. He goes to the

cross for me and for you, that God may redeem and restore us as His children - even though we do not deserve in any way, shape or form all the kindness, love and mercy which God showers upon us day by day. And to show the power of the new covenant, that Saviour rises again, to give the full blessings of life to His people, to bring us at last to the wonderful glory of life in heaven, where we will really know God as He knows us, where we will see just how blessed we are, because God has made us His through the everlasting covenant He has established in Christ.

Yes, this is the deal of a lifetime. God offers us everything - life, forgiveness and salvation - and asks nothing in return. He gives us the fullness of His blessings, without cost, without obligation, simply because of His love for you. God made that covenant with you at your baptism. There, He declared "I will be your God and Father, and you will be my child. I will bless you, forgive you and lead you through the uncertainty of this world. I will be with you wherever you go, and will bring you at last to the safety and glory of my eternal home. I will never forget my promises to you, and I will never go back on my word."

Friends, how blessed we are, to have such a God! In a world where people are always looking for a better deal, we have the best deal of all. God is our God. He forgives us and gives us faith to believe in Him and His promises. And He will give us the fullness of life with Him. That, my friends is the best deal of all. And you have His promise on that, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen.

My fellow redeemed, may God fill you all with great hope and joy in your believing. Amen.