

Lynn, when I was growing up, I believed my Dad was the smartest man in all the world. He never made a mistake, there was nothing worth knowing that he did not know. How disappointed I was when I found out he was only human.

This was something my father told me many times. He was angry, felt betrayed because he felt his father had deceived him into believing he was perfect.

Now I am a Father, I see that it is all not so simple. My children need to feel secure, one way they do that is by imagining their parents are so much wiser and powerful than we really are. They need us to be consistent, not changing but the same. They want Sue and I to be the rock on which they can fasten for their security.

The day will come when they too will feel betrayed. They will see how their wise and powerful parents have failed them in many ways, and have been foolish in some ways, and weak. We will go through some difficult years and then hopefully emerge as friends.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever the writer of Hebrews tells us. Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change, writes the author of James. And we have interpreted these passages to mean that God is always the same, doing the same things in the same ways. God is perfect we believe and part of that belief is the understanding that how God would deal with us and teach us is somehow fixed and always the same in this changing world.

For some then, to do serious bible study and to find that in scripture God is constantly acting in different ways, telling his prophets to announce he is going to do one thing then doing something quite different, for some this is most upsetting.

It was for Johah. Sent to Nineveh with the message that in 40 days God would destroy the city because of their wickedness, Jonah did not want to go. He rebelled because he was afraid that once he had spoken the message, God would

change his mind. Jonah did not want to be labeled a fool, a false prophet, so he ran away. We know of the fish, and how God got Jonah back on track, but we also know that when Jonah did as God commanded that what he feared is exactly what happened. He said the city would be destroyed, the people repented and God changed his mind. Poor Jonah.

We are children, like Jonah. We want a God who will not change, who when everything else is changing will be exactly what he was fifty years ago. But that is not the kind of God we worship.

Consider our first lesson for today. God had made a covenant with his People, Israel. At Mt. Sinai he gave them his law, written in stone. Not paper, or by word of mouth, but written in stone, enduring, certain, sure.

But it didn't work. The whole Hebrew Bible is a continuing witness to this one fact, it didn't work. God raised up kings, sent prophets, repeatedly called his people back to the stone law but it didn't work.

So we read in our first lesson, Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant with them broke though I was their husband, says the Lord.

God had tried it, it didn't work, now God was going to change his ways. If the covenant in stone didn't win his people, then a different covenant is needed.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Not in stone, but in the hearts of his people would God write this covenant.

And we read: And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother saying 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 ~~sins~~ iniquity and remember their sin no more.

This is what we know as the new testament, the new covenant. We believe this promise has been fulfilled in part in Jesus Christ. God has forgiven our iniquity, God has remembered our sin no more, through faith God has written this covenant on our hearts.

Of late I have been hearing people say more and more, what will be will be. They have been talking as if their lives are written out in stone by God, and they must simply walk through their part. This is a fatalistic view of life. It is the coward's way out. There is nothing I can do to change what will be so why try.

Our God is not a God who has mapped out and planned all of history to follow some pattern. Our God is a living, dynamic God who always is trying new ways to reach us and win the whole world. He gave his son for us, with the Holy Spirit he walks with us to win our hearts and lives for himself.

I think of the illustration of a boxer. If the boxer is punching a target that never moves, then each punch can be the same. But when he is fighting another boxer, then he must be constantly on the move, always adjusting, reacting. God does not change in and of himself, but as he fights against evil and unbelief and despair in this world, constantly he changes what he is doing, he reacts, he adjusts. That is why his word that brings faith is not some engraved in stone word, never changing, but is the living dynamic word that is preached to the people of God, in no two churches the identical word on any Sunday, but everywhere the same God present in the word which is preached.

One day the kingdom of God will come. One day the new covenant shall be complete. No longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, ~~save the Lord,~~ for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.