

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

April 2, 2006

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalms 51 or 51:11-16
Hebrews 5:(1-4) 5-10
John 12:20-33

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus is a man without illusions. He knows He's going to die – die a brutal, humiliating death. At this point I think Jesus knows why He is to die. He accepts it.

I think Jesus has some intimation – some understanding that His death is not simply martyrdom for a cause. His death actually signifies the end of all that has gone before – the beginning of a new world. His death signals a totally new covenant between the creator God and His creation, a new covenant in which, Jeremiah tells us, “iniquity is forgiven and sins are forgotten” - all sins for all humanity. It's a new page, a clean slate, a fresh start.

The scale of it all! You see, my making a sacrifice for you is not the same – does not approach – the power of Jesus giving everything – giving His life – for persons He will never see or know – you and me. Jesus will be “lifted up,” first on a crude wooden cross, then in His Ascension to the Father. Jesus will suffer the first that all – all – may participate in the second. A first person singular sacrifice leads to a third person plural salvation. His sacrifice shows perfect obedience – obedience to the will of the Father.

Jesus' perfect obedience – obedience even to death - brings salvation. What is obedience? My mother would have said, "If you don't know, I'm certainly not going to tell you." Simply put, obedience means putting the will of another before our own wishes – putting someone else in the center of our lives. That center for Jesus, and for you and for me, should and must be God.

So the obedience and sacrifice of one man – Jesus – brings salvation to us all. We all inherit this New Covenant. The question arises, "Is that new covenant individual or corporate?"

Corporate salvation is the idea of the old covenant – the Old Testament. Everybody – all of Israel – every single person – had to be obedient for the covenant to be fulfilled – for salvation. Obviously, that never happened. They never even came close. Do we expect to do better? If so, we are in big trouble.

But we are not in trouble. One man's obedience and sacrifice has taken that burden from us. Salvation is ours – for each of us and all of us – because of His obedience and death on that cross.

In His Holy Name.