

**Ps 147; Jer 31:7-14; Eph 1:3-14; Jn 1:1-18**

### **Covenant Renewal Service**

In this first service of the New Year 2020 we will keep the faithful practice of John Wesley and renew our vows to Jesus. With all the activity of the Christmas Season, sometimes we forget that our God is a God of covenants. When God makes a promise to you, He keeps it with eternal faithfulness. Even when we put our attention elsewhere, He remains completely true to what He says. His Name is His Word, and His Word is His bond – His covenant.

A rich man had a party. He showed his guests his swimming pool filled with alligators and announced, “I promise that anyone who swims across this pool and comes out alive will have a choice of a million dollars or my daughter’s hand in marriage.”

No one wanted to go for the challenge. All of a sudden, there was a big splash. A man was swimming like a crazy across the pool and he came out alive at the other end.

So the host asked, “Which do you choose: the million or my daughter for your wife?”

The man replied, “I don’t want your money or

your daughter, just point out the guy that pushed me.”

All things came into being by the Word of God. When God spoke, time, energy, matter and all creation became actual. You and I are composed of the breath of the Creator God. Our Gospel for today sets in place things we need to know about our God – Creator – Redeemer – Sustainer. The Redeemer is God from before the beginning of what we experience as our world. He is the eternally begotten Son of God. When all this is no more, our God will be as He has always been – eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, holy and good. When you and I do not remind ourselves – and remind one another – that God holds all things in His hands – we slide onto the throne of our lives and behave as though we put the sun and moon in place – and we call all the shots.

The darkness spoken of by John chapter one is the shadow of rebellion and sin that entered the world even in Eden. Humanity encountered the tempter, Satan, and that darkness fell. John teaches that Jesus Christ is the light that shines into human life and dispels that darkness. That is

the Epiphany. Only He, by his own sacrifice in the flesh, removes sin and the death it brings. In His presence we are enlightened – cleansed – we are known and we come to know our God more and more intimately. Those Magi from the east traveled very far to gaze at the Light that had entered the world.

John alludes to Genesis 1 because he is asserting that the coming of Jesus Christ – Messiah – is nothing less than a New Creation. Each man and woman – boy and girl – who meets, believes, trusts and follows Jesus is reborn. New birth into eternal life – today, here and now. Jesus often said, “You are very near the kingdom.” He also says “The kingdom of God has come.” Wherever Jesus is – there is the Father – there is the Holy Spirit – and those who receive that ultimate reality are citizens of Zion – the New Jerusalem.

Now, on account of the fallenness of the world – and every human heart – Jesus is not known by any natural process. No, it takes the working of the blessed Holy Spirit to crack the shell of our cocoon – our separation from the Life of God. The fallen soul is helpless until heaven sends

help. John says, “He (Jesus) was in the world, and the world came into being through Him; yet the world did not know Him. He came to what was His own, and His own people did not accept Him.” (Jn 1:10-11) It takes supernatural power to become a child of God. You and I do not possess that power. It comes from God the Holy Spirit.

When you and I receive the New Life in the risen Lord Jesus, we are born – “not of blood or of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but of God.” (v 13) We are transformed.

Today may be very important in your life. If you have received Jesus and believe in Him, you are about to renew your promise – your covenant with Him. But, if you have never said, “Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I come to You today in faith and trust that You are my Savior. That You will forgive me my sin. Please come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. Amen.” – then you have the opportunity to do so this morning. You will be – you will become – a child of God. Amen.