

**THE CIRCUMCISED HEART**  
**Service of Nailing our Sin to the Cross**  
**Ash Wednesday –March 5, 2014 –Romans 2: 29 & Colossians 2: 9-14**  
**First in a Series: “What Does The Church of the Covenant Mean?”**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

The sign of the Old Covenant was circumcision –what is the sign of the New Covenant? The sign of the New Covenant is *“The Circumcised Heart”*. Pastor Emily and I are preaching on the Old and New Covenants in the season of Lent this year. Systematically we are working our way through the covenants in the Old Testament through the New Covenant established through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament people could not be part of the people of God if they were not circumcised. If one were a man and in covenant with God, in this relationship which God establishes by reaching out to people, then one would be circumcised. Since the coming of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ this is no longer the case. But there is a different and a new sign of the New Covenant. And this, I believe, is the circumcised heart. We are not in the New Covenant if our heart is not circumcised...

There are hints of what this means in the Old Testament. When King David is dealing with the enormity of his sin in relationship to God in relation to Bathsheba his internal “heart-pain” is real and profound. King David is responsible for committing adultery, conceiving a child out of wedlock and being personally responsible for the death of one of his most loyal and best friends, Uriah. In Psalm 51 King David writes: *“A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” (Psalm 51: 17)* This broken and contrite heart is a circumcised heart.

When the prophet Ezekiel is prophesying to the people of God, urging them to repent and return to the Lord God Almighty whom they have forsaken, there is an allusion to a broken and contrite heart. The people of Israel have gone after other gods, they are sacrificing their children to foreign gods, they are worshipping in the high places, they are committing all sorts of sin and harlotry and idolatry. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies to them: *“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you”* declares the prophet, *“and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36: 26)* Literally, this is God saying He will cut out this heart of stone that is within us, that is unfeeling where God is concerned, that is unappreciative of what the Lord God has done for the people of God, that loves the Lord God not, and will cut out and do radical “heart surgery” if you will upon us, putting a new heart that loves God within. This is a spiritual incision cut by the Great Physician. The new heart and the new spirit of Ezekiel is the circumcised heart.

The prophet Joel, in the midst of a land whom the Lord God is no longer blessing, exhorts the people of God to turn away from their own ways and turn again to God’s ways. God declares through the prophet: *“Yet even now return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your hearts and not your garments...” (Joel 2: 12-13)* Returning to God includes being convicted of one’s sin and shortcoming, returning WITH ALL YOUR HEART, with weeping and mourning, and RENDING our HEART. This rending of our heart, this contrition and heart pain, is the circumcised heart.

It is made clearer in the New Testament in the passage from Colossians which we just read. The Apostle Paul declares: *“In HIM (in Jesus) also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ...” (Colossians 2: 11)* Now in the New

Testament it is no longer a physical circumcision, now it is a spiritual one. Paul goes on to write: *“And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with HIM (with Christ), having cancelled the bond which stood against us...this he set aside, nailing it to the cross...” (Colossians 2: 13-14)* Jesus Christ nailed His heart to the cross; we are to do the same. Our sin and distance from God is cancelled by what Jesus has done at Calvary for us. We were dead but now we are alive in Christ Jesus. We were dead in our sins but now we are alive in the spirit. Our heart is rent, our sin convicts us, our heart is broken and contrite in relation to what Jesus has done for us. Christ has nailed our sin to the cross and it is no more. Our heart is broken by His love and kindness, by the mercy we have received rather than the judgment we deserved. Our sin, nailed to the cross of Christ, and the great cost it was for Jesus to suffer and die for us, causes our heart to break, to be broken by our sin, and to be reformed, a new heart placed within us by the Spirit of the Living God.

In the New Testament, in the book of Romans, Paul puts it this way: *“The real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual not literal.” (Romans 2: 29)* This broken-ness and interior heart pain caused by our sin in relation to God’s mercy and love at the cross is the spiritual circumcision, caused by the Spirit of the Living God. This spiritual circumcision is the sign of the New Covenant; this spiritual circumcision is the sign of the New Covenant. The sign we are in Christ Jesus is the circumcised heart.

One of the greatest sermons recorded in the New Testament is the one preached by the Apostle Peter right after Pentecost. Peter has betrayed and denied his best friend, Jesus. He has denied him three times. When he hears the cock crow he knows that he has sinned against the Son of God. He of all people should have known better. But the sermon he preaches after Pentecost is amazing for its clarity, directness and spiritual forcefulness. Peter declares to all those assembled on that day: *“this Jesus...you crucified and killed...” (Acts 2: 23)* He says directly, plainly and forcefully that those people, whether they were there or not, whether they had any actual hand in the death of Jesus, whether they raised a hand against Jesus or not, nevertheless, they were responsible for the death of the Savior of the world. When they heard this Word proclaimed by Peter, that they were responsible for the death of Jesus their Savior, then it is recorded that they were, *“CUT TO THE HEART”.* (Acts 2: 37) Their heart became convicted and painful; their old heart of stone where God was concerned was cut out and a new heart and a new Spirit put within them, their heart was rent, it hurt and ached, it was broken and contrite, they realized their own responsibility for the death of the Son of God whose only sin was that HE loved them. Their heart was circumcised. And they cried out, *“Brethren, what shall we do?” (v. 37)*

Beloved --Who and what nailed Jesus to the cross? We nailed Jesus to the cross. And our sin nailed Jesus to the cross. The *“New Covenant shed in my blood”* as Jesus declares came at Calvary. And Calvary comes when we realize that it is I who nailed Him to the cross. It is MY SIN that nails His hands and feet to the cross. It is my SIN that plait the crown of thorns and shoves them down upon His Sacred HEAD NOW WOUNDED, that spears the Son in His wounded side --I and my sin are responsible for Calvary. God has reached out to me in Covenant love but it is my sin which nails the Savior of the world to a tree on dark Calvary. If this does not **cut you to the heart** then I do not know what will.

As we nail our sin to the cross at the end of the service, please remember the One into whose hand and feet we nail our sin. Please remember that it is this pain in the human heart, this rending of the human heart, that is the sign of the New Covenant. The circumcised heart is the sign that indeed Jesus has died for us and for our sin and that we are in covenant relationship with HIM. And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND~*