

**"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.  
I will be their God, and they will be my people.  
No longer will a man teach his neighbor,  
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord.  
"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."**

This week I have been thinking about getting a tattoo. I went to the Clipsal 500 last week and I reckon I must be the only person in Adelaide that doesn't have one. Everyone seems to have a mark on their bodies these days. The only question is what should I get? Perhaps it should say "mother" but then my wife might not be too happy about that. Perhaps I should have her face inscribed somewhere on my body but then she might want a say in what part of the body I put it on and what happens when it goes wrinkly! People often have their bodies marked with the names or faces of people special to them like a girlfriend, wife or child, or to reflect or recognise special relationships. Footballers get one after grand finals to recognise the special bond between them.

Maybe I should get a tattoo to recognise the most special relationship I have and that is with God as a Christian. Maybe it should be a cross because that would remind me that my relationship with God is based on the death of Jesus Christ for me on Good Friday and the forgiveness of my sins, not on anything I do for God. In my previous parish the other pastor I worked with got just that a large cross on his arm. When he played footy it certainly got him noticed for God! Not sure if I really want to be marked for life like that though.

Come to think of it I have already been - marked for life, by God – marked with the cross of Christ, on my forehead and on my chest. It happened at my baptism. Maggy got hers today. You can't see it, but it's still there, on her head and on her heart. *"Maggy receive the mark of the holy cross, as a sign that Christ the crucified has redeemed you."* That's what I said to her just before baptising her, and that's just what she got from God, the mark of the cross, the sign that Jesus died for her, the sign that will remind her daily that her sins have been forgiven throughout her life, she has a new and eternal life to live with and for God as his child and part of his family. She belongs to Jesus now and can know God and relate to him as her Father intimately and personally through him. She has been sealed with his Holy Spirit. That's what her baptism says and that's what the sign of the cross will remind her of. *"I am baptised, I am somebody for whom, Jesus died, I am a new creation of God, I belong to him and his family. I am empowered by his Spirit to live for him."*

Every baptised person has the mark of the cross. You can't see it but God does, and it doesn't fade. God stands by it, he stand by his promise in baptism, his washing of us with water and his word.

Through the prophet Jeremiah in the first Bible reading this morning God said a time was coming when he would make a new covenant or relationship with his people.

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Knowing God personally, knowing and wanting to do and be what he wants us to do and be, and being forgiven of our failures to do that. That's what God promises. And isn't that just what baptism does and give us. A new relationship with God as our Father, a new inner nature that loves God and wants to be everything he wants us to do and be, and all through the gift of forgiveness, forgiveness won by Jesus for us.

People often think being a Christian is about obeying rules and commandments. But they and we know that we don't keep them, at least not perfectly. Just like Old Testament Israel who were rescued by God and given the commandments as a way of thanking him but they failed and broke them again and again. So do we. We don't need any more rules from God, what we need is forgiveness and a new inner nature, a new relationship with God. We need his power to want what he wants and to do it willingly, not because we have to. That's just what Jeremiah says God would give us as part of his new covenant or relationship with us.

That's just what baptism does. It brings us into the new covenant based on Jesus and his death that forgives us.. Maggy entered that new covenant of God's grace in Jesus Christ today and we all did when we were baptised. God has now written or inscribed or tattooed his law on her and our hearts. God writes his love and his will not on stone tablets or a book but on living beating hearts just like hers. She is marked out as a Christian belonging to Christ and has been renewed inside and empowered to live for him. What God writes on her heart happens in her.

The cross we were marked with and the law of God written on our hearts at baptism may not be visible to other people, but will be seen in how we believe, how we love and how we relate. There is a different law at work in us, a different life we live with God and for God by his power, the power of his forgiveness as his covenant people.

Maggy will do that imperfectly in this life just as we all do, but the cross on her forehead and over her heart will remind her the new covenant God makes with us is about forgiveness. It will clear her conscience and comfort her heart and give her the heart and mind to start again each day.

Jeremiah says there will be a day when we will know and relate to God so well and do what he asks so willingly won't need pastors and priest and parents to teach us. In heaven that will be true. But until then because we struggle against our old sinful self each day we still need parents and pastors and others to encourage and teach us so that the new life God created at baptism remains alive and grows. Maggy needs Christian parents and she needs the church to encourage her new relationship with God. Today her parents and all of us committed ourselves to that for her as we do for all God's family.

In a moment as God's family we will come to his table to share his meal. Just before he gave up his life for the world on Good Friday Jesus took a cup of wine and said **"this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"**. Then he gave it to the disciples to drink. And he went ahead and died to bring about that new relationship. We come into a new relationship with God based on forgiveness through Jesus. Through Jesus we know God's heart personally and we are given the will and power to live for God. As we come to communion today we receive his body and blood, the blood of the new covenant relationship with God, through the forgiveness of sins. May this gift assure you that you belong to him, that you know him personally and empower you to live for him.

As God's baptised people we are marked with his cross, marked for life, eternal life, and marked for a new life for him now. His law is written on your hearts and you are empowered to live for him in the world this week. God help us to do that. Amen.