

Isaiah 41: Do not fear, something so awesome is about to happen, and when you see it, you will be amazed! You will stand in awe!

What is a promise?

Let's pause for a moment to consider what we are doing tonight.

I may be stereotyping, but ask a little girl to promise you she will be good, and she will, as long as there is a reward.

Ask a little boy to promise he will not be mischievous and he will keep his promise, as long as you are not looking.

Ask a politician and they will tell you, a promise is something which gets them into office.

There are various religious practices (not religions) which inform people, if they made a promise, then discovered something better, it is more noble to do the better thing, to be followed by an act of atonement for breaking the promise. The seriousness or significance of the promise broken, the greater the act of atonement; like feeding or clothing a greater number of underprivileged people, or enacting a more demanding penance.

Philosophers like Immanuel Kant suggest promises should always be kept, but his opponents, the pluralists argue, in some circumstances, breaking one's promise might be more beneficial, than the cost of keeping it.

Some others think promises are a trap, a trick or a ploy to make you do something, to benefit the one asking the promise be made.

In these popular and sometimes humorous expressions of "promise", we ignore the fact, a **promise is a commitment**, a commitment made by one person to do something, even in the face of inconvenience, difficulty or discomfort; a promise is a commitment.

But a promise falls apart when one person commits to do something they are **unable** or **unwilling**, or have a limited ability to do, **but** they want the benefit from the other person, so they make a promise: *I will try to be good, because I want that slice of chocolate cake you promised!*

The passages from the Bible we heard read to us this evening, the songs we sung and had sung to us earlier, focus on God's commitment to us, that He has not abandoned us to suffer the consequences of a fallen and broken world.

God's Word is His commitment to do what He promised.

But God's promise is different from the promises we make to each other. God acts, does something which we, with all our knowledge and wisdom, with all the resources at our disposal, are not able to do.

What is it we are unable to do?

We are **not** to able to make ourselves good enough to be acceptable to God; we are **not** to able to do anything to measure up to God's Holiness.

Only God can do what we cannot, and this for this His unique ability to do that which we cannot, we have a special word: God makes a **covenant** with us. He says, *I will redeem you, I will save you, and I will bring you back to the Eden I created for you, **because I love you!** You don't have to do anything to make me love you. I love you without condition, because I made you and breathed my spirit into you; and because I love you, I will do what you cannot: I will come to you, as my Son, pay the price of your mistakes, and bring you back to me!*

This is **not** God's promise; This is God's **covenant** with us, because our Holy God is the only one who can deliver on His promise.

This is Christmas! We are reminded, God is acting on His covenant with us, by coming to us as His Son, through whom we are restored into our rightful relationship with Him.

The first and only important part of Christmas is **Christ**. God's covenant with you can be found in this person Jesus, who is the Christ!

"Fear Not!" He says. I am here to take you back to the Father. The choice is yours. Do you want to follow Him?

AMEN