

**SERMONS FROM ST. MATTHEW'S  
"A COMMUNITY OF HOPE"**

# **The Real New Deal**

**The Fifth Sunday in Lent, Year B**

**March 29, 2009**

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St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Richmond VA**

**Jeremiah 31:31-34**

**T**he time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "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. 34 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."

Chuck can't be here this morning, but he's asked me to make an important announcement. It's about the serious crisis which is affecting many people today. As you know, many, many people, not just here in the United States, but around the world, owe much more than they can ever pay. Many people today find themselves unable, and in some cases, unwilling, to meet contractual obligations to which they are legally bound, making them vulnerable to ruin. Countless millions of people are so desperate to survive in this crisis that they are feverishly working at anything they think might help them get by. They're inventing themselves and taking on roles and affiliations for which they are ill-suited, and they're stressed, anxious, and depressed as a result.

The origins of this current crisis go back much farther than most experts are willing to admit. In fact, they go back farther than anyone can

remember. This crisis has been so prolonged and so widespread that millions, if not billions of people worldwide are in mortal danger.

I've been asked this morning to announce a measure that will address every aspect of this crisis and reverse it completely. As you know, before he was elected president in the depths of the Great Depression in 1932, Franklin Roosevelt promised a "new deal for the American people". But what I've been authorized to announce to you is the Real New Deal. Here is a broad outline of its provisions.

The Real New Deal is not a program. It will not be directed by politicians, or administered through any institutions, agencies, systems, or associations. In order to participate, you will not have to fill out a form, or get a stimulus check in the mail, or report your income.

The New Deal is administered by and completely guaranteed by one Person. This Person will personally provide, from his own personal wealth, 100% of all benefits to every person who chooses to participate. No resources—none--from any government, bank, institution, trust, or corporation, foreign or domestic will go towards benefits distributed under the Real New Deal.

The Person pledging the Real New Deal will personally, from his own resources, pay any and all debts owed by any person who chooses to participate. Further, this Person will, in and of himself, using his own person and resources, fully satisfy all unmet contractual obligations on the part of any person choosing to be part of the Real New Deal.

There are also special provisions for those who are struggling to fit themselves into roles and affiliations that they know they were never intended to fill. The Person offering the Real New Deal will personally guarantee the complete fulfillment and satisfaction of the cosmic destiny and deepest aspirations of any person who chooses to be part of the New Deal.

Most importantly, because the current crisis is so serious that it has put so many millions in mortal danger, the Person will personally infuse his own life into any person who chooses to participate in the New Deal. He will guarantee their life with his own.

You may have wondered how you can participate. Here's how. First, you have to recognize that your situation is desperate. In fact, that seems to be the major obstacle so far to full participation in this wonderful plan. People the world over are so concerned with other huge problems, for example, the current

economic crisis, that they crowd out the eternal, mortal spiritual crisis millions are facing and have been facing since the beginning of time.

If you indeed recognize that no amount of financial security in this world can guarantee you security in the next, then you're beginning to realize how serious our real crisis is. You're ready to receive the Real New Deal in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Person who alone administers the The Real New Deal and supplies all its resources himself.

Jeremiah predicted the Real New Deal some 700 years before Christ. It's the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will pay all your debts for sin, the debts you or I can never pay. God through Jeremiah announces, "**For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.**" Under the New Covenant, Jesus has fulfilled all our contractual obligations. By faith in Christ, God imputes Jesus' own righteousness to us. As Paul said when he was announcing the Real New Deal to the Romans 3:22-23 "**This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**"

Because of human sin and breach of contract—unrighteousness, human beings are in danger of eternal catastrophe and ruin. "**For the wages of sin is death,**" But Jesus in himself guarantees eternal life to all who put their faith in him: "**but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.**" (**Romans 6:23**) When we come to him earnestly, expectantly, in full recognition of both our need and his desire to rescue us, he fills us with his own life with the Holy Spirit. The New Testament uses a business term to describe what that means: the Holy Spirit is a "**deposit, guaranteeing what is to come**" (**2 Corinthians 2:22, 5:5, Ephesians 1:14**). That means he is a "down payment" on the full inheritance God has for those who put their trust in Christ.

And part of that inheritance is being the persons God created us to be. So much of who we are in this world we make up or pretend in order to get by or to fit in. It's stressful and anxiety-producing, and often we're not even aware of it. But in Christ, God has sort of programmed our destiny and our complete fulfillment and satisfaction. As we conform ourselves more and more to Christ, we become more and more who we really are, not who we present ourselves to be to others—and to ourselves. The deep peace and power of our true humanity begins to make itself known.

I'm not the only one who's been asked and authorized to announce the Real New Deal. Every one of us who have received benefits from its source and administrator Jesus Christ has that same job. Jesus was just one person, but in

him God chose to multiply his riches and grace to millions and billions of people over millennia of time. That's why Jesus said he's like a single seed in this morning's gospel. If the seed stays a seed, nothing happens. It doesn't fulfill its purpose. But if the seed "dies", if it consents to become a seedling, then a stalk of wheat, it produces more seeds, each of which contains in it that same reproductive potential.

The real human crisis began long ago, and the Real New Deal was announced not long after in God's dealings with the Hebrew people. Our purpose here this morning is to announce that Real New Deal for humankind in Jesus Christ, to take into ourselves all its benefits by faith, and to be strengthened to go out into a world that needs the hope only God can provide in the Real New Deal in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*