

**Sermon for Pentecost 14**  
**September 10, 2017**

**“Commit to the Lord”**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from the LORD our God. Amen.

People who belong to God, did you hear Joshua’s challenge to the people of Israel? Nearing the end of his life, and having led the people of Israel in their conquest of the promised land, Joshua challenged them to renew their commitment to God. He challenged them to fear and worship the Lord. He challenged them to get rid of any other “gods” – ones that their neighbors worshipped or ones that their family used to worship.

Are you ready for the same challenge? You, like the Israelites, already know God. Has your spiritual life gotten a little rusty? Has the fire of your faith settled into a glowing ember, but no longer a blazing fire? Do you ever turn the temple of your heart into an apartment building, with room for other “gods” to share that space with the Lord?

Would anyone here today feel comfortable standing up and saying, “My faith is as strong as could be. If you could see my faith, it would look like John Cena, the ripped pro wrestler. I am super committed to God at all times. I do not let sin enter my life or my mind or my actions or my words.”

I think that we all have more wisdom than that, wisdom we get from God’s Word. Our faith always has room to grow. Our Christian living always has room for improvement. So listen to Joshua and get rid of other “gods.”

Get rid of the false god that’s excuses sin by saying, “This is how we do things out here. It’s the West River way.” Here’s what I mean. We say, “Cussing is a bad thing to do.” But it’s pretty clear to me that the way we do things out here is make sure not to cuss in the church building or in front of the pastor, but at home, in the field, in the shop, at the store, in the car are all apparently places to let ‘er rip. Maybe you figure that if you live in the middle of nowhere, God can’t hear you.

Get rid of the false god that gives the excuse for sin, “That’s how I was raised.” Here’s what I mean. Some people were raised to go to church every week. If that’s why you go to church every week, that’s no good. If you go to church just out of a habit, not because you are eager to hear God’s life-giving Word and see your fellow Christians, it doesn’t really matter how you were raised. You missed the point. But other people were raised to rarely go to church. If that’s how you were raised, is that how often you would benefit from church and if you came more often than you were raised to do so, would that be a bad thing? If you were raised that it’s okay for a man to look at another woman and fantasize about another woman even if he’s got a wife, so long as he doesn’t make a move it’s okay...does that change what the Bible says? Does the way you were raised give you an exception to what the Bible says? If you were raised to be irresponsible with your finances, does that make it okay with God to be a poor manager of his blessings? If you were raised to be really good at saying the right thing to pastor but doing the wrong thing whenever pastor’s not around, does that make it okay with to be a hypocrite? “That’s the way I was raised,” is not the basis of morality or ethics. You get the wisdom of what’s right and wrong from God’s Word, whether your family life growing up showed it or not.

Get rid of the false god of being stuck in a rut, no matter what that rut might be. Some people are stuck in the rut of showing up to church for Christmas and maybe a couple other times per

year, like if the kids sing. Get out of that rut. Others are stuck in the rut of going to church pretty often, maybe twice a month. Get out of that rut. Other are stuck in the rut of going to church almost all of the time, but never using God's Word the other six days of the week. Others are stuck in the rut of going to church almost all the time, giving large offerings, reading the Bible every day, going to Bible study on Sundays too, but it's a rut all the same because it has fallen into going through the motions.

Are you ready for the challenge from Joshua? Who are you going to serve, fear, worship, and trust? The Lord, all the way? Or some other gods or sins that you keep around as pets, or excuses?

The Israelites were ready for the challenge, and in their response to Joshua, they gave the reason why. They said, "We will certainly not abandon the LORD to worship other gods! <sup>17</sup> For the LORD our God brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery, and performed these great signs before our eyes. He also protected us all along the way we went and among all the peoples whose lands we traveled through. <sup>18</sup> The LORD drove out before us all the peoples, including the Amorites who lived in the land. We too will worship the LORD, because he is our God."

The Israelites knew God. They knew who he was and what he did. God kept his promises. God brought them out of slavery. God brought them to the promised land. God protected them. They summarized it in the last line of their reply, "He is our God." *Our* God, they said. The one who blessed them and loved them and cared for them and promised them.

The Lord is our God too. You know God. You know who he is and what he's done. You know that the Lord our God is the one who created the universe and the world and made you. The Lord our God made promises to you before you were ever born that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head, that the Messiah would be crushed for your iniquities and that his punishment would bring you peace. Promises that as assuredly as Jesus rose from the dead, you will rise from the dead too, and as certainly as Jesus is glorified in heaven, you will also be glorified in heaven on the Last Day.

For that reason, because you know that the Lord is *our* God, commit to the Lord. Commit to the Lord!

Know him. Know him better by the end of today than you did this morning. And do that every day. Read your Bible and do your devotions, not because you're in a rut and it's just something you gloss over during the day, but because you want to know your best friend better.

Worship him. Get together with other people who are excited to worship him too! Learn and grow at worship, at Bible study.

Serve him. Serve him gladly. Serve him willingly. [The women of this congregation have a specific opportunity for that at the Altar Guild planning meeting, to discuss how do we want to serve God as a group in the upcoming year.] Think about how you can serve and build up our congregation, and then do it in an orderly way. At the end of this service, in fact, I'm going to give all of you a specific way to do that. I'll be handing out invite cards to each of you. Give them to someone this week, and invite them to join you for church next weekend, and we'll see how God blesses our efforts.

Commit to the Lord, to know him, worship him, serve him, and share him. The Lord is our God, the God who loves us, and cares for us, and saves us. Amen.

Text: *Joshua 24:14-24*

*At the end of Joshua's earthly life, the God's people renewed their covenant promises to follow and obey the one true God.*

“Therefore, fear the LORD and worship him in sincerity and truth. Get rid of the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and worship the LORD. <sup>15</sup> But if it doesn't please you to worship the LORD, choose for yourselves today: Which will you worship—the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living? As for me and my family, we will worship the LORD.”

<sup>16</sup> The people replied, “We will certainly not abandon the LORD to worship other gods! <sup>17</sup> For the LORD our God brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery, and performed these great signs before our eyes. He also protected us all along the way we went and among all the peoples whose lands we traveled through. <sup>18</sup> The LORD drove out before us all the peoples, including the Amorites who lived in the land. We too will worship the LORD, because he is our God.”

<sup>19</sup> But Joshua told the people, “You will not be able to worship the LORD, because he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions and sins. <sup>20</sup> If you abandon the LORD and worship foreign gods, he will turn against you, harm you, and completely destroy you, after he has been good to you.”

<sup>21</sup> “No!” the people answered Joshua. “We will worship the LORD.”

<sup>22</sup> Joshua then told the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you yourselves have chosen to worship the LORD.”

“We are witnesses,” they said.

<sup>23</sup> “Then get rid of the foreign gods that are among you and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

<sup>24</sup> So the people said to Joshua, “We will worship the LORD our God and obey him.”