TITLE: Commitment

TEXT: Mt. 19:3-6; Jere. 31:31-33; Heb. 9:11-15;

Ro. 10:9-10; Jn 17:20-23; Ps. 37:5-6

INTRODUCTION: This morning, I want to talk about commitment. If there is one thing that seems to be lacking in our world today it is people who are really willing to commit themselves to anything.

 Do you realize that Commitment is a central theme in Scripture?

The “why” of why we are here, why we were created in the first place is we were created for fellowship and relationship with God.

 Fellowship and relationship require commitment.

 God is committed to us and He expects that in return we be committed to Him.

 The relationship that God intends to have with us is a relationship of commitment.

God has given us many things in this life to practice the art of commitment.

 One such area is the marriage/family relationship.

Do you realize that marriage is an earthly example and model of the kind of relationship that God desires to have with us?

How is it that the Church is described in the New Testament? One descriptive term used for the Church is the bride of Christ.

 Scripture talks about the marriage supper of the Lamb. That time when we will be forever united with Christ for eternity.

And what is the cornerstone of marriage? Commitment is!

In John Hersey’s novel, The Wall, there is a haunting scene.

 The Wall is a novel about the Polish Jews and the Nazis. In this particular episode, John Hersey tells how the diabolical Nazis shipped Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to different concentration camps. A long column of men and women is passing in front of a Nazi officer.

 If a person looks fit, the officer sends him to another line, for work in a factory. If not, he goes to the death line.

 A man and wife, middle aged, are in the column. They are quarrelling venomously. Some irritation had become as big as all life. Perhaps they are blaming each other for their plight. If their quarreling seems out of place, it is also understandable. In the face of the danger confronting them, and their probable fate, all reserve and discretion have fled. Reason has left.

 Finally, the two arrive in front of the Nazi officer who will decide their fate. He looks them over briefly and motions the man to the working line. The wife he sends to the death line. For a moment the man stands alone. Then, with a sob, he leaves his haven and slowly walks over to his wife. They stand together, wordlessly, as they go off to death together..

 Most wedding ceremonies have at their core this promise:

For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish…till death do us part.

 Then we, the participants, are called upon to make it permanent. We are called upon to agree to the covenant promise--I do! I Will!

 What are we saying “I do” or “I will” to? The most sacred of all covenants…. the blood covenant.

For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish…till death do us part.

 This sounds simple enough at the time of the promise, but the living of it out, in good times and in bad times, through thick and thin, can only be done in total commitment.

 It is troubling that the divorce rate in America has reached about the 50% mark. What is even more troubling is that the divorce rate is basically the same within the Church.

 What is the main problem? Commitment is! Or more specifically, the lack of commitment.

 Studies show that in marriages where couples have lived together before getting married the rate of divorce is over twice as high as in marriages where the couples did not live together first..

 What is believed to be the reason is that for those living together before marriage, one or both people have a problem with commitment.

And commitment is the one thing that is essential for a successful marriage.

The Pharisees were trying to get Jesus to say something contrary to the Law of Moses so they could entrap Him, get Him to say something contrary to the law so they could have a reason to accuse Him of wrongdoing….

**Matthew 19:3 - 6 (NIV)**

**3Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”**

**4“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’****5and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’ ?  6So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”**

 Jesus here describes the marriage union as a blood covenant relationship which requires 100% commitment.

**‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’.  6So they are no longer two, but one.**

**The two will become one flesh! They are no longer two, but one.**

This describes the blood covenant relationship!

**EXAMPLE:** Blood Covenant ceremony…First they would Split the animal sacrifice in two and then separate the halves and walk between them in a figure 8 opposite each other. Symbolically what they were saying was ---MAY GOD DO TO ME AS I HAVE DONE TO THIS ANIMAL IF I EVER BREAK THIS COVENANT THAT I AM ENTERING INTO…

Then they would Exchange cloaks= what I have is yours, what you have is mine.

Then they would Exchange belts. In the culture the belt is not what held their pants up but what they attached their weapons to.—I will protect you and you will protect me..

 Then they would Exchange lists of assets and liabilities….literally all I have, both good and bad, is now yours and all that you have, good and bad, is now mine….(If I needed some money I would go to you and ask for our checkbook)

 The last thing done…The Covenant would be Sealed or consummated with the covenant meal together= two partaking of the same nutrient to symbolize two becoming as one..

What does this sound like? Marriage ceremony!

 For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, …till death do us part.

 (The two shall become as one)

There is to be no breaking or backing out of a blood covenant once you enter it. You had testified before God that “may God do to me as I have done to this animal if I ever break this covenant.

 If you were to break the blood covenant then the penalty was death and you would have to fear, not just the person that you entered a blood covenant with, but all of their family and any other family that may have entered into blood covenants with them

 So, what does this teach us? The Blood Covenant is about commitment and if we are going to enter into a blood covenant with someone, we need to be 100% willing to 100% commit to that person for the rest of our natural life before we enter into that covenant.

 If you are single today and are one day contemplating getting married, then you need to be sure you can be 100% committed to that marriage you are entering into before you say I do!

 Being 50% committed or 75% committed or even 99% committed won’t work!

 If you enter into a marriage relationship 99% committed to the person you are marrying that 1% non-commitment on your part will more than likely end up destroying your marriage..

 It’s easy to hang in there in marriage when you are experiencing the better and the richer and the health but when it comes to the times of the worse, the poorer and possibly sickness it will necessitate nothing less the 100% commitment to get you through.

 And every marriage will experience all of these different dimensions. There will be better times and worse times. There will be richer times and poorer times. There will be healthy times and times of sickness-physical, emotional or spiritual.

 But when two people are 100% committed to each other the times become irrelevant to the success of the marriage.

 Every marriage ceremony that I have ever preformed contains these words…. Sense marriage is an institution of God it should not be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but with reverence and respect and in the fear of the Lord..

 At some point in my pre-marital counseling with the couples that I marry, I usually ask them this:

 If you cannot look at the person that you are contemplating entering into this blood covenant of marriage with and guarantee them and yourself that you are in this for the long haul, that there will be no outs, that you are committing yourself to this person for the rest of your natural life, if you cannot in good conscience make this extreme of a commitment then my advice would be don’t get married.

 Hold out until you find someone that you are willing to make this kind of extreme commitment to.

 If you are not 100% sure that you will be 100% committed then don’t do it. Being 50% committed isn’t going to work! Being 75% committed will not work. Even being 99.9 % committed you are putting your marriage at risk…

 Why? Because for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united unto his wife and the two of them shall become one flesh and what God has joined together let man not separate.

 The word used for man here:

 ***anth'-ro-pos***

***manfaced*, that is, a *human* being; mankind**

What God has joined together let mankind; human beings not separate.

 That includes all mankind! Mankind outside of the marriage and the mankind that makes up the marriage.

 What God has joined together let no man (or woman) separate and that includes the two that have entered into the covenant together.

The word used for separate comes from the Greek:

***kho-rid'-zo***

**From****G5561****; *to* *place* *room* between, that is, *part*; reflexively to *go* *away:*—depart, put asunder, separate.**

 In other words, what God has joined together God intends to stay together…

That will only be possibly when both parties are 100% committed to the covenant…

Why is this important? Because the marriage covenant is an example or fore type of a much more significant covenant relationship…

**Jeremiah 31:31 - 33 (NIV)**

**31““The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
    “when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
    and with the people of Judah.
32It will not be like the covenant
    I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
    to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
    though I was a husband to[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2031%3A31-34&version=NIV#fen-NIV-19724a)**] them,[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2031%3A31-34&version=NIV#fen-NIV-19724b)**]”
declares the Lord.
33“This is the covenant I will make with the people 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.**

What is this new covenant that God promised He would make with His people?

The New Covenant of Jesus Christ!

**Hebrews 9:11 - 15 (NIV)**

**11When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.****12He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.**

**13The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.****14How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!**

**15For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.**

Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant that God has made with mankind.

**That those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance….**

 When we accept Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our life we have entered into a Blood covenant relationship with God..

 Jesus shed his own blood as the sacrifice to seal this covenant relationship that we enter into.

 Like a marriage, our salvation is a blood covenant relationship.

 When we stand before the cross of Christ, repentant of our sins, we are walking between the halves of the sacrifice. The Lamb of God that was slain to take away the sins of the world.

Romans 10:9 tells us how we enter this blood covenant relationship…

**Romans 10:9 - 10 (NIV) 9That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.****10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.**

When we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord just what exactly is it that we are doing?

 We are exchanging our covenant vows!

 By proclaiming that Jesus is Lord we are saying…all that I have, all that I am is now yours just as all that You have and all that You are is now mine!

 We even seal the covenant with the covenant meal.

 We partake of the very spirit of Christ. We become one with Him.

Just listen to the prayer that Jesus prayed for you and I..

**John 17:20 - 23 (NIV)**

**20“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,****21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.****22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:****23I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

 This is the seal of the blood covenant that we have entered with Christ. The communion meal that seals the covenant!

**22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

 Just as in the marriage relationship if we enter our relationship with Christ with anything less than 100% commitment then we will drastically reduce the chances of success for that relationship.

 Think about this question for a moment?

Can you be anything less than 100% committed to Christ and still be called a Christian?

 Can you be a Christian and be 50% committed to Christ?

Can you be a Christian and be 75% committed to Christ?

Can you be a Christian and be 99% committed to Christ?

 Is it possible to be an uncommitted Christian?

 Isn’t “uncommitted Christian” an oxymoron, A contradiction in terms?

 It’s kind of like a woman saying I’m kind of pregnant!

 You can’t be kind of pregnant! You either are or you aren’t!

To say that I am an uncommitted Christian is a contradiction in terms because Christianity is all about the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Lordship is impossible without 100% commitment. Jesus cannot “kind of be” the Lord of our life. He either is the Lord of our life or He is not the Lord of our life. We have either given Him control of our life or we have not.

What is it that the word Lord means as it is used in Romans 10:9?

**“Ko-ree-os”** **Supremacy, supreme in authority, the Master! The controller!**

 If there is a master then there has to be a servant, someone who has placed themselves under the control of another.

 I have used this illustration of the word Lord as it is used in the phrase…If we confess with our mouth Jesus is Lord….before …

 Example: Civil War…Slaves that refused to go when they were set free. They loved their master, had developed a relationship with him that was like a family kind of relationship—These slaves became known as free bondsmen—slaves, not by mandate but slaves by choice.

 Because of relationship and their commitment to that relationship they chose to stay as servants to their masters.

 That is what the context of the word Lord is in Ro. 10:9!

We are free to go but because of relationship we choose to stay and if we truly make Christ our Lord it will require that we commit to Him 100%. Just as He has committed 100% to us..

 In this life God has given us places to work on and practice the art of commitment. Places in life where anything less than being 100% committed is not good enough!

Marriage, raising children, even Church are things that require 100% commitment on our part if they are going to be successful…..

 Husbands—you have been called to be 100% committed to your wife. Anything less is not good enough.

Wives—you have been called to be 100% committed to your husband. Anything less is not good enough.

Parents—you have been called to be 100% committed to your children. Anything less is not good enough!

As Christians-we have been called to be 100% committed to Jesus Christ and 100% committed to His earthly body, the Church. Anything less is not good enough!

**Psalms 37:5 - 6 (NIV)**

**5Commit your way to the LORD;**

**trust in him and he will do this:**

**6He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,**

**the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.**

Think about this:

If you need heart or brain surgery, will you settle for a surgeon who is anything less than 100% committed to your operation?

 If you are brought to court, will you settle for an attorney who is anything less than 100% committed to representing you?

 If you stand at the alter would you be willing to say I do if you knew the person you are about to say I do to is only going to be 50% committed to you?

Here is the fact of the matter…

 When we truly commit our lives to Christ then we will be 100% committed to our marriages.

When we truly commit our lives to Christ then we will be 100% committed to our children.

When we truly commit our lives to Christ then we will be 100% committed to His earthly body, the Church.

Because true commitment only has one percentage point and that is 100%!

 Anything less is not commitment!

 This morning are you living a life of commitment?

Are you 100 % committed to your marriage?

Are you 100 % committed to your children?

Are you 100 % committed to your Lord?

**5Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.**