

Media Notes

There are significantly more responsive readings in worship today than most weeks. Please take a close look at the Litany of Thanksgiving, Prayer of Confession and Covenant Prayer

There is no sermon starter video.

There is one slide for the sermon which names the Key Covenants of Scripture.

Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the context of covenants in the scripture and how to connect our lives with God through covenant renewal.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because we tend to forget the connection that we have with God. Renewing our covenant is essential to growing toward perfect love of God and neighbor.

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon is part of a service modeled on the Wesley's Covenant Renewal Service and will be preached on the final Sunday of 2014.

What are the next action steps?

The next action steps are to renew our covenant with God for 2015.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that the Cristian life is redeemed from sin and consecrated to God.

Metadata

1. Topic(s)
 1. Covenant
2. Sermon Books of the Bible
 1. 1 Peter
 2. Deuteronomy
 3. John
3. Series
 1. Stand alone
4. Speaker
 1. Andrew Conard
5. Tags

1st Sunday after Christmas Day
Covenant Renewal Service
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1zIMjcC>

December 28, 2014
2 Kings 22:18-23:3
1 Peter 1:13-25
John 15:1-8
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,447
Video is not available online

1. Covenant, new year, promise, discipleship, pathway, disciple,

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Transition

Covenant Prayer - In Bulletin

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Keep Covenant in 2015

Closing Prayer

2 Kings 22:18-23:3, CEB

But also say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to question the Lord:

This is what the Lord, Israel's God, says about the message you've just heard: Because your heart was broken and you submitted before the Lord when you heard what I said about this place and its citizens—that they will become a horror and a curse—and because you ripped your clothes and cried before me, I have listened to you, declares the Lord. That's why I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will go to your grave in peace. You won't experience the disaster I am about to bring on this place."

When they reported Huldah's words to the king, the king sent a message, and all of Judah's and Jerusalem's elders gathered before him. Then the king went up to the Lord's temple, together with all the people of Judah and all the citizens of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets, and all the people, young and old alike. There the king read out loud all the words of the covenant scroll that had been found in the Lord's temple. The king stood beside the pillar and made a covenant with the Lord that he would follow the Lord by keeping his commandments, his laws, and his regulations with all his heart and all his being in order to fulfill the words of this covenant that were written in this scroll. All of the people accepted the covenant.

1 Peter 1:13-25, CEB

Therefore, once you have your minds ready for action and you are thinking clearly, place your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Don't be conformed to your former desires, those that shaped you when you were ignorant. But, as obedient children, you must be holy in every aspect of your lives, just as the one who called you is holy. It is written, You will be holy, because I am holy.

Since you call upon a Father who judges all people according to their actions without favoritism, you should conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your dwelling in a strange land. Live in this way, knowing that you were not liberated by perishable things like silver or gold from the empty lifestyle you inherited from your ancestors. Instead, you were liberated by the precious blood of Christ, like that of a flawless, spotless lamb.

Christ was chosen before the creation of the world, but was only revealed at the end of time. This was done for you, who through Christ are faithful to the God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. So now, your faith and hope should rest in God. As you set yourselves apart by your obedience to the truth so that you might have genuine affection for your fellow believers, love each other deeply and earnestly. Do this because you have been given new birth—not from the type of seed that decays but from seed that doesn't. This seed is God's life-giving and enduring word. Thus,

All human life on the earth is like grass, and all human glory is like a flower in a field. The grass dries up and its flower falls off, but the Lord's word endures forever.

This is the word that was proclaimed to you as good news.

John 15:1-8, CEB

[Jesus said,] "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vineyard keeper. He removes any of my branches that don't produce fruit, and he trims any branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit. You are already trimmed because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. A branch can't produce fruit by itself, but must remain in the vine. Likewise, you can't produce fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything. If you don't remain in me, you will be like a branch that is thrown out and dries up. Those branches are gathered up, thrown into a fire, and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified when you produce much fruit and in this way prove that you are my disciples.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

*** Start Sermon Timer ***

Opening

Finding What You are Looking For Story

[Text here]

Transition

During the season of Advent over the past couple weeks we have been seeking Christ through the stories of those who were connected at the very first Christmas. Last Wednesday, at Candlelight Christmas Eve with celebrated the light of Christ coming into the world.

Sermon Outline

Today we consider one of the ways that we stay connected with God in Christ, a covenant. In the sermon today, we will consider:

- What is a covenant?

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- Why does covenant matter?
- What difference could covenant make in my life?

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

What is a Covenant?¹

“A covenant is a formal commitment made by one party to another party, or by two parties to one another; its seriousness is normally undergirded by an oath and / or rite undertaken before God and / or before other people.”

Let's take a look at some of the key covenants in scripture:

¹ Goldingay, John “Covenant, OT and NT.” In Volume 1, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine D. Sakenfield, et al. Nashville: Abindgon Press, 2006.

Key Covenants of Scripture

Covenant	Context	Covenant between God and ...	Promise of the Covenant	Scripture
Noah	God has flooded the whole earth	Noah	God promises to “Never to flood the earth and thus destroy life on earth”	Genesis 9:8-17
Abraham	God has told Abram to leave home, go to a new land and he will become a great nation.	Abraham	God promises to make Abraham a great nation through land and descendants.	Genesis 15:18-20 Genesis 17
Sinai	The people of Israel have become slaves in Egypt and Moses has led them out of Egypt. This marks a transition in the promise to Abraham to become a great people to focus on the relationship between this people and God and a focus on the giving this people the land.	People of Israel	The people of Israel have been delivered and it is time to take up their responsibility	Exodus 19:8
Moab	The people of Israel have spent 40 years in the wilderness. They are at the edge of the promised land	People of Israel and future generations	Re-establish the covenant which was made at Mount Sinai for a new generation	Deuteronomy 29

Covenant	Context	Covenant between God and ...	Promise of the Covenant	Scripture
New	As the people of Israel live in the land a variety of kings and people don't hold up their side of the covenant. The people are taken into exile in Babylon. God promises a new covenant that is coming.	People of Israel	The requirements of the covenant will be written on the hearts of the people, unlike those of Sinai and Moab, which were written in a book. God promises to: "be their God, and they will be my people. ... [God] will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins."	Jeremiah 31:31-34
Jesus	Jesus came to fulfill the covenant in a way that will benefit the world more spectacularly than the previous versions of the covenant.	Jews and Gentiles	Jesus' death is interpreted as the image of a new covenant for the whole world.	Mark 14:24 Luke 22:20 Romans 9:4 Ephesians 2:12 Romans 11:25-27 Hebrews 8-9

Transition

So, what does all this mean for us?

Why does covenant matter?

Keeping Our Promises Story

[Text Here]

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Covenant for Today

The stories of covenant matter because these are not just promises for a people who lived a long time ago in a far off place.

These promises are for us. They are for today.

The new covenant in Jesus Christ is real and it is right now.

God invites us to be part of this covenant.

What difference could covenant make in my life?

When We Say Yes

When we say yes to the covenant with God in Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to live a new life – life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We can live in perfect love of God and neighbor.

We live as citizens of God's kingdom.

We enjoy a life in which we experience the fruit of the spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self control.

Discipleship Pathway

The decision to enter into covenant with God and live as a disciple of Jesus Christ is not one that we make only once in our lives. It is something that we have to decide to take action on every day.

We talk about this as our discipleship pathway here at the church.

	Starting Point	Next Steps	Going Deeper
Worship	Attend worship less than once a month	Attend worship 1 to 3 times per month	Worship every week unless sick or out of town
Grow	Group / Class: Basic Christian Belief Individual: Occasional use of spiritual practices	Group / Class: Biblical literacy Individual: Regular use of spiritual practices	Group / Class: Ongoing weekly meeting for care, accountability and spiritual growth Individual: Daily use of spiritual practices
Give	Give in Sunday, Christmas Eve and Easter offering	Make an annual commitment and give in proportion to your income	Make an annual commitment and give in proportion to your income at a tithe (10%) and beyond
Serve	Occasional or once a month volunteer	Member of a committee or team Occasional service beyond the walls	Leader of a committee or team Ongoing service beyond the walls
Share	Share your faith through recommendation	Share your faith through recommendation and invitation	Regularly share your faith with others through recommendation, invitation and personal testimony.

Conclusion

When we renew our covenant with God, we recommit ourselves to this pathway and living as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Good News

The good news is that the Cristian life is redeemed from sin and consecrated to God.

Through baptism, we have entered this life and have been admitted into the new covenant of which Jesus Christ is the Mediator.

He sealed it with his own blood, that it might last for ever.

Call to Action

On the one side, God promises to give us new life in Christ, the Source and Perfecter of our faith.

On the other side, we are pledged to live no more for ourselves but only for Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us.

From time to time we renew our covenant with God, especially when we reaffirm the Baptismal Covenant and gather at the Lord's table.

Today, however, we meet, as the generations before us have met, to renew the covenant that binds us to God.

Let us make this covenant of God our own.

Invitation to Covenant

Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants.

Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him.

Christ has many services to be done.

Some are more easy and honorable, others are more difficult and disgraceful.

Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both.

In some we may please Christ and please ourselves.

But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

It is necessary, therefore, that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ.

Christ will be the Savior of none but his servants.

He is the source of all salvation to those who obey.

Christ will have no servants except by consent; Christ will not accept anything except full consent to all that he requires.

Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.

Confirm this by a holy covenant.

To make this covenant a reality in your life, listen to these admonitions:

First Admonition

First, set apart some time, more than once, to be spent alone before the Lord; in seeking earnestly God's special assistance and gracious acceptance of you; in carefully

thinking through all the conditions of the covenant; in searching your hearts whether you have already freely given your life to Christ.

Consider what your sins are.

Consider the laws of Christ, how holy, strict, and spiritual they are, and whether you, after having carefully considered them, are willing to choose them all.

Be sure you are clear in these matters, see that you do not lie to God.

Second Admonition

Second, be serious and in a spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third Admonition

Third, claim God's covenant, rely upon God's promise of giving grace and strength, so you can keep your promise.

Trust not your own strength and power.

Fourth Admonition

Fourth, resolve to be faithful.

You have given to the Lord your hearts, you have opened your mouths to the Lord, and you have dedicated yourself to God.

With God's power, never go back.

Final Admonition

And last, be then prepared to renew your covenant with the Lord.

Transition

I invite you to join with me in an attitude of prayer using the responsive covenant prayer which you will find in your bulletin.

Covenant Prayer - In Bulletin

Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven, open your hearts to the Lord, as we pray:

All: O righteous God, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, see me as I fall down before you. Forgive my unfaithfulness in not having done your will, for you have promised mercy to me if I turn to you with my whole heart.

One: God requires that you shall put away all your idols.

All: I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all, covenanting with you that no known sin shall be allowed in my life. Against your will, I have turned my love toward the world. In your power I will watch all temptations

that will lead me away from you. For my own righteousness is riddled with sin, unable to stand before you.

One: Through Christ, God has offered to be your God again if you would let him.

All: Before all heaven and earth, I here acknowledge you as my Lord and God. I take you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for my portion, and vow to give up myself, body and soul, as your servant, to serve you in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

One: God has given the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way and means of coming to God.

All: Jesus, I do here on bended knees accept Christ as the only new and living Way, and sincerely join myself in a covenant with him. O blessed Jesus, I come to you, hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked, unworthy even to wash the feet of your servants. I do here, with all my power, accept you as my Lord and Head. I renounce my own worthiness, and vow that you are the Lord, my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom, and take you for my only guide. I renounce my own will, and take your will as my law.

One: Christ has told you that you must suffer with him.

All: I do here covenant with you, O Christ, to take my lot with you as it may fall. Through your grace I promise that neither life nor death shall part me from you.

One: God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.

All: I do here willingly put my neck under your yoke, to carry your burden. All your laws are holy, just, and good. I therefore take them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions, promising that I will strive to order my whole life according to your direction, and not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.

One: The almighty God searches and knows your heart.

All: O God, you know that I make this covenant with you today without guile or reservation. If any falsehood should be in it, guide me and help me to set it aright.

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside by thee.

Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

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**Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine,
and I am thine.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.**

Keep Covenant in 2015

I invite you to make this covenant not only in your heart, but in word; not only in word, but in writing.

Therefore, with all reverence, lay the service before the Lord as your act and deed.

And when you have done this, sign it.

Then keep it as a reminder of the holy agreement between God and you that you may remember it during doubts and temptations.

Closing Prayer

	8:30 AM	11:00 AM
Sermon Time		