

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

“I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.”

Baptisms, Confirmations, Funerals, Weddings, and Communion are all services in which everyone present has an opportunity to participate. At these services, at least within the Methodist Church, the congregations are asked to read and/or repeat parts of the liturgy. The question for us, the question for you this morning is, “Did you mean what you said?”

Those who are or have been married, during your wedding service you said “I Do” to some questions, “*will you have this man or woman to be your wedded husband/wife, to live together in the estate of holy matrimony? Will you love him/her, comfort him/her, honor and keep him/her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep only to him/her, so long as you both shall live?*” Did you mean what you said when you said “I Do?” Did you mean what you said, or were you less than truthful, in other words did you lie? Do/did you love your spouse? Do/did you comfort your spouse or is/was it a one way relationship? Do/did you always honor your spouse in everything you said and did? Do/did you forsake all others or were friends, activities, hobbies, work, self, or maybe even playing church more important? Not worshipping God but playing Church. “Did you mean what you said?”

At every Baptism and Confirmation you have attended, at least within the Methodist Church, you were asked, as parents and/or as part of the congregation, as part of the service, “**Page 35 & 38 Hymnal.**” Did you mean what you said or were those words you said just a religious kind of façade, just words, in other words did you lie? Did you lie to the child being baptized, or to the youth being confirmed? Did the youth, did you lie during your Confirmation? “Did you mean what you said?”

In this day and time one of the few things in this life we have to depend on is our word. We as individuals have our word for good or bad. That’s right, our word. If your word is no good then you have nothing. In days past a person sealed deals with a handshake and a word. Today we have complicated contracts, which no one reads and/or understands. People today marry signing pre-nuptial agreements, which is nothing more than saying we will eventually divorce so don’t get comfortable. What ever happened with meaning what you say and standing by those words?

On January 15, 1716, Philip Livingston was born in Albany, New York, to an affluent family. He graduated from Yale University in 1737 and became a wealthy merchant in New York. He was elected as a member of

the General Assembly of New York and was also a representative to the Continental Congress. He helped found Columbia University. He established the endowment of the professorship of Divinity at Yale University and was very active with in the church.

Charles Hardy, then governor of New York wrote:

“Among the considerable merchants in this city no one is more esteemed for energy, promptness and public spirit than Philip Livingston.” Philip was a believer in Jesus the Christ and humbly followed his Lord. The supreme test for Philip came in signing the Declaration of Independence. He was one of the more wealthy delegates at the Continental Congress and stood to lose the most if a war were to break out. Yet, he did not waver in signing and pledged his personal fortune for the cause of liberty. He helped underwrite the cost of the Continental army even after his family’s homestead was burned. Philip Livingston died in June 1778. He never saw independence, but he had the courage, conviction, and commitment to live by faith and his convictions. This man meant what he said and he stood by his words. Do you mean what you say?

Israel had survived an awful lot. They fled Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and traveled through the wilderness. After all this maybe someone felt it was time to just sit back and have a party. And party they did, and to give some atmosphere to the celebration they created a golden calf. These people had professed their love and devotion to God on numerous occasions, but their actions said they really did not mean what they had said.

This is almost the same thing the Corinthian people were doing. Corinth was a city located on the peninsula (or neck of land) that joined Peloponnesus to the rest of Greece, on the southern side, and had two ports adjoining, one at the bottom of the Corinthian Gulf, where they traded with Italy and the west, and on the other side where they traded with Asia. From their location it is no wonder that Corinth was a place of great trade and wealth; but it was also a place of great vice; in particular it was noted for fornication and worldliness.¹

The Corinthian people were claiming Jesus on the one side and still remaining part of the social scene on the other. These people saw no harm in worshipping God on the Sabbath and worshipping other gods on the other days.

After all they had told God they loved Him and prayed to Him on the Sabbath. That other stuff really didn't mean anything; it was just the price of doing business. With businesses to run and friends and patrons who were not Christians they had to fit in to the world.

Paul was reminding the Corinthian people that the Israelites, God's chosen people never reached the Promised Land due to their worldly sinful ways. We read in **verses 6-8** "*Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.*" Current example, the lottery, the church says the lottery is wrong, preachers around the state preached against it and many even lobbied against it as well. Christian's state wide joined together in the fight the lottery. Then the state said let's use the lottery money for education. Since then, how many of those who preached against and fought against the lottery have and/or do accept scholarship monies for their child which comes from the lottery? How many said one thing but live another? Do you mean what you say to God?

All the Israelites prayed to God, they crossed the Red Sea, they ate the manna, they drank water from the rock, but that was not enough, and as a result they never saw the Promised Land. Those Corinthians needed to remember that, the people of Landrum need to remember that. It's not just about what we say on Sunday or at a Bible Study or during a church ministry, but it's how we live the rest of the week. When you joined the church, God's church, you spoke to Him and to the congregation present, "Did you mean what you said?" **Patricia and Ellen!**

Have you ever heard the name William Mulholland? Mulholland was an engineer, a man with many engineering feats to his credit. Unfortunately, history remembers him for something else besides his strengths as an engineer. A few minutes before midnight on March 12, 1928, Saint Francis Dam in San Francisquito Canyon, CA gave way and some five hundred people lost their lives. Water that reached a height of eighty feet destroying everything in its path. The sad part of the story was that the dam had begun leaking long before and Mulholland and others knew it, but they didn't think it mattered. Mulholland meant no harm.

The Department of Water and Power valued life as much as anyone. They just didn't believe that the leaks they were seeing could result in the damage that occurred.ⁱⁱ

There are leaks in the dam that holds our society together, there are leaks in the lives of church people; leaks that one day if left unchanged may and will overwhelm us. I pray they will not. Some of people are already overwhelmed with God and the world. Listen, the Bible is clear on two things: there is forgiveness for the sinner and there is help for the person seeking to resist sin. God will give us the grace for both—forgiveness and restoration if we have fallen, and the ability to stay on the path of righteousness if we are being tested. Whatever your need may be, God's grace is sufficient. **1 Corinthians 10:21-22** *"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"*

Too many of us attempt to live one way on Sunday and another way the rest of the time. Too many of us say we will do but in reality we do very little if anything for the cause of Jesus the Christ. Too many of us think all

that has to be done is to read the Bible and show up to church services sparingly. Many never even read Scripture and saying sparingly would be putting it mildly. But we have no problem throwing the term around Christian. There goes a fine upstanding Christian man or woman. The dam is leaking people and unless we start standing by our word, unless we start meaning what we say the dam is going to burst.

Do you care about God's church? Do you really? How often do you skip worship? How often does worship not just take a back seat but get put into the trunk? How often does our, does your commitment come with stipulations? You know what I mean, I will do this God but I will set the parameters not you. How often is our, is your commitment based on time left over after we or you do what you want?

Do you care about God's church? Do you really? When was the last time you invited someone to attend church with you? Not just someone who attends elsewhere but someone who does not attend or is affiliated church? When was the last time some helped with the nursery? Some do but there are many I believe gave it up for Lent years ago. We have too many people within the church who feel the word commitment is just something you say in

passing or is a punch line from some story. Seems we have no problem saying one thing and living another. Listen to **1 Peter 4:11** “*Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.*” I know there are some who believe with their whole heart they are committed and their lives show they are to themselves! When was the last time you fill in the blank. We cannot continue to say one thing and do another.

God was faithful to the people of Israel, but they were unfaithful to God. And so they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. God has been faithful to us, to you and you may have been unfaithful. You may be wandering in the wilderness as well. There is hope, but only one hope: The grace of God through our Lord Jesus the Christ. It’s time to take a stand for Christ and stop our wavering. It’s time to become committed, really committed! The point is; say what you mean, and most importantly mean what you say.

ⁱ Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.

ⁱⁱ *What Really Counts* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2005), p. 203.