YOU PROMISED
January 12, 2020 –Joshua 24: 14-26 –Baptism of the Lord
The Church of the Covenant

Our society and culture today is a swirling mass of promises made and broken; one day we promise and the next day something we deem more important comes along and we break that promise; we excuse ourselves to be promise-breakers by saying we are too busy, or too tired, or this promise or that promise is more important, or we just don’t feel like keeping it…and so our lives are disempowered because it is only through promises that our lives, and the life of our family, and the life of our world are changed and transformed. God uses promises to transform us…that is, when we keep them…

So Joshua has assembled all the people of Israel at Shechem, including all the elders, heads, judges and officers. And they are standing out in the open and they are standing by tribes and then also by families – fathers and mothers and children, all together. And Joshua reminds them of the covenant that God has made with them. How He has brought them out of Egypt and led them through times of trial and blessed them abundantly along the way. Baptism is all about COVENANT. Its about relationship. Its about God choosing to enter into a relationship with a family, and an individual, and a child, and a whole church family. God has come today to embrace you and enter into relationship with you, to make a promise to you, to be in covenant with you. And God ALWAYS keeps His promises. God ALWAYS keeps His covenants. He cannot do otherwise because His character by His very nature is to be faithful, to make promises and to keep promises. He has made an unshakable, unbreakable covenant with Israel (and with your family and with our church family). And family by family, mothers and fathers and children and grandchildren all stand on the mountain at Shechem and Joshua reminds them that God has promised and God has kept His promises to them. But the question of the moment is this –HAVE THEY KEPT THEIR PROMISES TO GOD? Have the people of God kept their promises to God? God is the same yesterday, today and forever, unchangeable and unchanging–have they been constant and promise-keeping in relation to the One True and Living God? So Joshua challenges them –“Choose this day whom you will serve.” (Joshua 24: 15) Make a promise. Make a commitment. Enter into the covenant that God has made with you, and has demonstrated His faithfulness to you. Make the promise. Keep the promise. And then he states: “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” (v. 15) As for me (there’s the individual promise) and my house (there’s the family promise as an entire unit) we will serve the Lord. Baptism is the individual and family promise that completes God’s covenant with us. So what are the promises in baptism???

First, “Do you believe Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior?” This is the first question and it is a question of FAITH. Will you publicly stand up before the world and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life? It is not a tacit nod to mere belief, as in, sure, I basically somewhere kinda believe in God. No, it is I will love the Lord with ALL my Heart and with ALL
my soul and with ALL my strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5) Not sometimes, but all the time. Not with part of our heart, with all of our heart. Not when we feel like it or only when its convenient to do so, but as a covenantal promise as a life-changing, life-giving promise and relationship with the Lord God Almighty. Do you believe in Jesus? YOU PROMISED.

Second, “Do you trust in Him?” Do you trust in Him to walk with you on your worst day? Do you trust Him to be with your child when they are sick, or rebellious, or wandered far away from God? Do you still trust in Jesus to take your child’s hand and walk with them through life? Do you trust in Him? YOU PROMISED.

Third, “Do you intend your child to be his disciple, to obey his word and to show forth his love?” The intentionality question. Is it your intention to do everything in your power to have your child one day stand up and profess Jesus as Lord on their own? Is it your intention for your child to be part of the Covenant with God? Is part of the family of faith? Because of their faith in Jesus will one day they go to heaven and live forever, only because of what Jesus Christ has done for them? Do you intend your child...? YOU PROMISED.

Lastly, “Will you be a faithful member giving of yourself in every way and seeking the fellowship of the church wherever you may be?” This is the modeling question. You are to model your faith to your child; your words and your actions must match. Where you sit on Sunday mornings will teach your children more about what you really believe than every word you will speak to them. Will you be a faithful member? YOU PROMISED.

And then there’s the question to the rest of the congregation. Because this is a covenant made not just to this child and not just to this family, but to the congregation as a whole, there is our part of the covenant. To all of Israel standing at Shechem. Will we support this family as they seek to keep their promises to God? Will we keep our part of the bargain? Will we support the new Director of Children, Youth and Families or not? Will we volunteer to teach Sunday School and Vacation Bible School or not? Will we be part of God’s plan in these young lives to offer them youth group and bell choirs and mission trips and Confirmation? We will all stand up and say “We do.” Do we? WE PROMISED.

There is no more important promise that we will ever make than the promise to God we make in relation to children. This is a highest level priority, right up there with our promise to Love and Serve Jesus. These promises will turn and transform our society for the good. These promises will make strong families and great communities. These promises will raise up future generations of the faithful. These promises will shape people and make them into Christians. These are the promises that make the pathway clear to eternal life in Jesus Christ. Where do you want to end up when you die? Is there any more important priority or promise that you will ever make that is more important than these????? Joshua draws the line in the sand and declares to the ages –“Choose this day whom you will serve.” Either the gods of this world
who will have you try to keep thousands of promises and will wind up keeping none. Or to the Lord God Almighty, who has made you an absolute, unshakable, immovable promise to you and your children, to generations yet to come, through the precious blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ? Does He need to do anything more than go to a cross to demonstrate to you how absolutely committed He is to keep His promise to you?

Every child is a promise to keep. I’m not telling you parents anything you don’t already know, but your children are amazingly literalists. They take us at our literal words. If we say something it must be literally true. If we promise something it must be literally sure and certain. So as I conclude, I want all of us to envision in our mind just one little child standing in front of us. We have all made promises to God, relational and covenantal promises. And we have all made promises to this young family. And we have all made high level promises to this child. Is it too hard to support Christian Ed? Is our time too valuable? Are we too busy and we’re waiting for a time when we have copious amount of free time (that day will never come) in order to volunteer? Someone else will pay for it. Lead it. Fulfill the promise I made for me. Nope. Just keep staring into the little eyes of this little child right before you. And then hear them say –YOU PROMISED. Choose this day…Amen and Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!