

January 12, 2020

“Are You Really Committed To Jesus?”
Psalm 146: 1 - 10; Romans 12: 1 - 2; Mark 12: 28 – 34;
Ruth 1: 1 – 19 (Sermon)

This morning we will be talking about commitment. I recently read that there are over 100 million Christian Church members in America. Christians go to church, pray, and read the Bible. However, when you watch the 6 o'clock news you have to wonder why the Church of Jesus Christ is not making a bigger impact on the moral and spiritual values in the U.S. I believe Dr. Charles Stanley correctly identified the problem. In his book, *Confronting Casual Christianity* he said, “*God’s people have made a decision about Jesus but tragically they have never made a commitment to Him.*” And, as you are well aware there is a major difference in a decision and a commitment. The question before each of us this morning is “***Am I Really Committed To Jesus.***”

The dictionary defines commitment as – a pledge, a bond, or a promise; an obligation to perform; to entrust, to give charge of. We all understand the meaning of the word commitment; however we all often fail to live up to what we say we are committed to. We mean well however, when things get inconvenient, or get difficult, or things do not go as we thought they would, we began to make excuses and we try to justify why we should not be obligated to honor our commitment. Today most people prefer to think of commitment as something that does not require any sacrifice. However, the truth is no sacrifice really means no commitment. Sacrifice is a vital part of commitment. I am sure you have heard the illustration about the hen and the pig supplying the farmer’s breakfast of bacon and eggs. Both the hen and the pig were committed. The hen was only partially committed since the egg for the farmer’s breakfast cost her very little. However, the pig was totally committed because the bacon for the farmer’s breakfast cost the pig his life.

In our scripture lesson from Ruth we have these same two levels of commitment. Ruth’s commitment to Naomi was total commitment whereas Orpah only showed a passing commitment to Naomi. First let’s look at Orpah commitment. In verse 9 and in verse 14 we read that Orpah loved Naomi. They kissed and they wept. As we would say today “*Orpah talked the talk, but she did not walk the talk*”. Then in verse 15 we read that Orpah left Naomi.

You see Orpah did not love Naomi enough to leave her own family. Orpah did not love Naomi enough to leave Moab. Orpah did not love Naomi enough to abandon her gods. The bottom line was Orpah was not willing to risk leaving her comfortable surroundings. Orpah was not willing to risk her physical security by not getting married again.

Now let's look at Ruth's commitment - There are 7 parts to Ruth's commitment in verses 16 and 17.

Ruth said:

Where you will go I will go

Where you stay I will stay

Your people will be my people

Your God my God

Where you die I will die

There I will be buried

May the Lord deal with me be it ever so severely if anything but death separates you and me

We need to carefully look at the meaning of each of Ruth's commitments because they are the same commitments that our Lord expects from all of His followers.

When Ruth said, "***Where you will go I will go***"; Ruth was saying, I will follow you no matter where you lead me. I will not question your leadership.

When Ruth said, "***Where you stay I will stay***"; Ruth was saying, I will accept the lifestyle that you have even if it means not having a house to sleep in or going without food. Ruth knew that a widow's life meant poverty but she was willing to accept this life style. Ruth wanted to help Naomi. Ruth just wanted to be with Naomi.

When Ruth said, "***Your people shall be my people***"; Ruth was saying I want to identify with you. I am forsaking my people, the Moabites, and I am adopting your people, the Jews. Ruth knew the Jews despised the Moabites but she was willing to accept being an outcast. Ruth was willing to remain a widow in a foreign land.

When Ruth said, ***“Your God my God”***; Ruth was saying; I am forsaking the idols and gods of Moab. I am forsaking my former way of life. I am accepting The One True Living God of Israel.

When Ruth said, ***“Where you die I will die”***; Ruth was saying I am making this promise for the rest of my life. My commitment is not just for today, it is for the rest of my life..

When Ruth said, ***“There I will be buried”***; Ruth was saying; I want to be with you in the life hereafter. Burial places were very important to the Jewish people. Their hope was for a bodily resurrection in the land of Israel. That is why Jacob made Joseph promise to take his bones back to Israel.

When Ruth said, ***“May the Lord deal with me be it ever so severely if anything but death separates you and me”***; Ruth as saying, this is my solemn vow. If I break my vow may God strike me dead.

Ruth came to the place that she could no longer rely on her husband, her family, her surroundings, her gods, or even herself. And when she did she turned to Naomi’s God, The One True Living God.

What about you friend, have you come to the reality that you can not save yourself and that you need a savior? Have you come to the point where you realize that you are totally dependent upon God. This morning we all need to think about our commitment to Jesus Christ. This account in the Book of Ruth provides us as Christians with a great model for our commitment to The Lord. The total commitment pledged by Ruth in 1:16 & 17 is the type of commitment that our Lord expects from all of His followers.

Commitment to Ruth meant submission to the authority of another person, going to a different place, leaving her family and friends, being more concerned for others than she was for herself, accepting a different life style, having a different hope for eternal life, and accepting The One

True Living God as her Lord. Commitment to Ruth was much more than words. Ruth's commitment meant action.

This morning each one of us needs to question our level of commitment to our Lord.

We all need to ask ourselves some hard questions:

Am I willing to follow Jesus no matter where He leads me?

Am I willing to leave my comfortable surroundings?

Am I willing to not to question Jesus' leadership?

Am I willing to accept a new lifestyle even if it would mean hardship?

Am I willing to leave friends or family who are pulling me away from living the Christian life?

Am I willing to accept being ostracized by my neighbors or coworkers for my Christian beliefs?

Am I willing to forsaking the false gods of money, popularity, social status, and / or pleasure and am I willing to only worship The One True Living God?

Am I 100% absolutely positive that I will spend eternity in heaven with Jesus?

*You see Ruth's commitment was motivated by true love. And true love is powerful. When we are motivated by our love for Jesus, total commitment is not a burden but rather total commitment to Jesus is a joyful experience. When we make a total commitment to The Lord He provides for all of our physical needs, our emotional needs, and our spiritual needs. However; commitment to The Lord does not exempt us from hardships, disappointments, or sadness in this lifetime. In fact Jesus told His disciples **"in his world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33). But the good news is that we are not alone; we have The Holy Spirit help us in meeting these trials and we have God's promise that our trials are not meaningless. We have God's promise that He will cause all things to work for our ultimate good! (Romans 8:28)*

Many people are attracted to Jesus but unfortunately they are not willing to turn loose of their family, their lifestyle, their possessions, or their security blanket to follow Jesus daily. Sadly, many people in the church today are like Orpah. They say they love Jesus but they do not love

Jesus enough to give up their security, their conformable surroundings or their life style. Sadly, some people even fall in love with Jesus but not as much as they love other things. Remember the rich young ruler. He loved his money much more than he loved Jesus. Ruth's commitment on the other hand is a model for all of us to follow. It was a total commitment. Ruth's love was true and Ruth chose the better part of life!

In this account we see that kisses and tears are not enough; true commitment always results in sacrificial actions. Commitment is a verb not a noun. Our commitment to Jesus will affect the way we treat our family, the way we treat other people, and it will affect everything we do and say. Our commitment to Jesus affects the amount of quiet time we spend with our Lord in prayer and the amount of time we devote to studying our Bible. Our commitment to Jesus affects our service to the church and determines our financial support of the mission of our church. Commitment starts with words and commitment always results in action. The good news is that when we make a total commitment to Jesus The Holy Spirit helps us to translate our words of commitment into action. We are not on our own; we have Divine help. When our heart is right with God then we only have to keep our eyes focused upon Jesus. Then God will enable us to fulfill our commitment. Our commitment to Jesus is a way of life. Naomi could not have asked for any more from Ruth than the vow Ruth made. And God does not expect any more or any less than that in our commitment to Him.

In our lesson from Romans The Apostle Paul urges every Christian to continually offer all of ourselves, body, mind, and will to Jesus Christ. God is interested in all of you. Remember the story of the farmer who wanted bacon and eggs for breakfast. To commit ourselves to Jesus means to yield our will to Him, entrust our life to Him, and place all that we have and all that we are at our Lord's disposal. There is no such thing as partial commitment. Jesus said; ***"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."*** (Matthew 12:30)

The key to commitment is love. In Psalm 146 we read about God's total commitment towards His people. Jesus loves us so much that Jesus gave His very life for us. In appreciation for Jesus saving you from burning in hell throughout eternity we should all want to be just as committed to our Lord as Ruth was to Naomi. That is the same commitment of discipleship we read about in our

lesson from Mark. While we say that we are committed to Jesus and we say that we will follow Jesus, many times we fall short. We say we are like Ruth but sadly many times we act like Orpah

God's Word to us this morning challenges each of us to examine our commitment to Jesus. *"Is your commitment to Jesus more like Orpah's partial commitment or is your commitment to Jesus more like Ruth's total commitment AMEN*

Several years ago I prepared a worksheet to help you do a self-analysis of your commitment to Jesus Christ. I am asking you to grade yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 in each of these seven characteristics of a committed Christian. Grade yourself like Jesus would grade you. A grade of one (1) means you need a lot of improvement and a grade of five (5) means Jesus would be very pleased with your commitment in this area. No one will know your score unless you tell them. This is for you to see what you need to work on. Romans 14:11-12 tells us why we need to continually work on our relationship with Jesus. ***"It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.***

After you have read the questions and the scripture verses in a category grade yourself like Jesus would grade you. Grade yourself in each of the seven categories. You are the only one who needs to see your grade. There is no reason to grade yourself any higher than you actually are because God already knows what your grade should be.

The whole purpose of this exercise is to encourage all of us to become more like Christ and be committed Christians. Please note I put the date at the bottom. Hopefully at least once a year you will go through this exercise again and see how much your commitment to The Lord has grown since the last time you graded yourself in each of the seven characteristics of a committed Christian at this time.

This is a self-evaluation to help you. **Will the Elders please pass out the self-evaluation sheets?**

"Are You A Committed Christian"

1. On a scale of 1 to 5 how would Jesus grade my prayer time?

(A 1 means I need serious improvement. A 5 means Jesus would be very pleased with my commitment in this area).

- a. Do you begin your day with prayer and pray about all of your decisions through the day?
- b. What percent of your prayer time is listening to God’s speaking to you?
- c. What percent of your prayer time is spent praising and thanking God?
- d. Do you feel power in your prayers?
- e. Do you routinely pray for your unsaved family and friends?
- f. Do you routinely pray for your church, fellow members, and pastor?

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6)

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

My Grade =

2. On a scale of 1 to 5 how would Jesus grade me on reading and studying the Bible?

(A 1 means I need serious improvement. A 5 means Jesus would be very pleased with my commitment in this area).

- a. Do you read your Bible each day?
- b. Have you read the entire Bible this year?
- c. Do you listen for God’s Word to you as you read?
- d. Do you apply God’s Word to your daily life?
- e. Do you believe God speaks to you through His Word?
- f. Do you enjoy reading God’s Word?

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2nd Timothy 3:16:)

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105)

My Grade =

3. On a scale of 1 to 5 how would Jesus grade my attendance and attitude about Sunday worship?

(A 1 means I need serious improvement. A 5 means Jesus would be very pleased with my commitment in this area).

- a. Do you look forward to Sunday morning worship?
- b. Is attending worship every Sunday a number one priority for you?
- c. Do you feel energized, encouraged, and equipped after attending worship?
- d. Do you believe Jesus is pleased with your worship?

- e. Do you come to worship expecting to have an encounter with The Living God?
- f. Do you express or suppress your emotion to God?

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)

“I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.” (Psalm 122:1)

My Grade =

4. On a scale of 1 to 5 how would Jesus grade my spiritual growth?

(A 1 means I need serious improvement. A 5 means Jesus would be very pleased with my commitment in this area).

- a. How would Jesus describe your relationship with Him?
- b. Do you regularly attend one of the Bible study groups each week?
- c. What priority do you place on learning how to think, talk, and act like Jesus?.
- d. Are you closer to Jesus today than you were a year ago?
- e. Do you invest more of your time pursuing spiritual things or physical things?
- f. Are you more aware of God intervening in your life today than you were a year ago?

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2nd Timothy 2:15)

“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

My Grade =

5. On a scale of 1 to 5 how would Jesus grade the stewardship of my money, my time, and my talents?

(A 1 means I need serious improvement. A 5 means Jesus would be very pleased with my commitment in this area).

- a. Do you view the money you have as yours or God’s money?
- b. Do you decide how much money you want to give before or after you get to church?
- c. Do you practice tithing? (Giving at least 10% of your income?)
- d. Do you routinely give an offering of Thanksgiving in appreciation of what God has done for you?
- e. What percent of your time do you devote to the Lord each week?

- f. Do you routinely volunteer your time and effort to clean the church, weed the flowerbeds, and / or do repairs of the church building?
- g. Do you routinely sing in a choir, teach a Bible study, bring food for fellowship, and visit the sick and lonely?

“Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Gallatin churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.” (1st Corinthians 16:1-2)

“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”(Malachi 3:8-10)

My Grade =

6. On a scale of 1 to 5 how would Jesus grade my participation in the ministry of His church at Mt. Paran?

- a. Do you know the names of most of the members of Mt. Paran?
- b. Do you wait for someone to ask you or are you actively involved in one of the ministry at Mt. Paran?
- c. Do you routinely volunteer to help in the nursery, be a greeter, or be an usher?
- d. Do you make a habit of calling people when they are not in church?
- e. Are you a member of the Prayer Chain?
- f. Do you offer to give people a ride to/from church?
- g. Have you volunteer to be a chaperone for youth group activities?

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (Romans 12:4-8)

My Grade = _____

7. On a scale of 1 to 5 how would Jesus grade you on sharing your faith with other people?

(A 1 means I need serious improvement. A 5 means Jesus would be very pleased with my commitment in this area).

- a. Do you enjoy telling people the difference Jesus has made in your life?
- b. Do people outside of the church see Jesus in you?
- c. Do you routinely offer to pray for people that are discouraged or in need?

- d. Do you routinely tell your neighbors and coworkers about Mt. Paran?
- e. When you are talking to strangers do you bring Jesus into the conversation?
- f. If being a Christian were a crime would your co-workers and neighbors have enough evidence to convict you?

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”. (1st Peter 3:15

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

My Grade =
