

Worship and Commitment Service

The John Wesley Covenant Renewal Service

Originally published by John Wesley in 1780

Revised, 2013 Wilmore Free Methodist Church

*congregation, please stand if able

INTRODUCTION

ALL: “Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant which will never be forgotten.”

(Jer. 50:5)

*HYMN 52 “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

ALL: “Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your holy name through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

ALL: The Lord’s Prayer (Using “Sins”)

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON: John 15:1-8

PASTOR: Friends, we need to fix these three principles in our hearts: that eternal things are more enduring and real than earthly things; that things not seen are as certain as the things that are seen; that upon your choice depends your eternal destiny. Choose Christ and His ways, and you are blessed forever; refuse Him, and you are undone forever.

And then, my friends, make your choice. Turn either to the right hand or to the left; Christ with His yoke, His cross, and His crown; or the devil with his wealth, his pleasure, and his curse. Then ask yourselves, “Self, you see what is before you; what will you do? Which will you have, either the crown or the curse? If you choose the crown, remember that the day you take this, you must be content to submit to the cross and yoke, the service and sufferings of Christ, which are linked to it. What do you say? Would you rather take the gains and pleasures of sin and risk the curse? Or will you yield yourself a servant to Christ and so make sure the crown?”

Do not delay in the matter. If you are unresolved, you are resolved: If you remain undetermined for Christ, then you are determined for the devil. Therefore follow your hearts from day to day; let them not rest until the matter be brought to an issue, and see that you make a good choice.

Next, begin with Christ. Cast yourselves upon His righteousness. You are exiles from the presence of God. Your sins are robbers, your pleasures are robbers, your companions in sin are thieves. If you stay where you are, you will perish. Christ offers to bring you to God. Will you say now to Him, “Lord Jesus, will You take me? Will You bring me to God and bring me into the land of promise? With You I will risk myself. I cast myself upon You, upon Your blood, upon Your righteousness.”

This is coming to Christ as your Priest. And by this you now renounce your own righteousness.

CONFESSION

PASTOR: Whether we are already forgiven sinners or still far from God, let us confess together our total dependence

on Him.

ALL: We acknowledge a deep sense of sin and misery. We see ourselves as sinners in need of a Savior. The Spirit of God has awakened us. We cry, "Lord, what am I! How is it that I'm bound by these chains! Lord, where am I! Is there no hope of escaping out of this wretched state? I am dead, if I continue as I am. What may I do to be saved?"

PASTOR: Being made aware of his sin and his danger, a sinner will look for help and deliverance, but he will look everywhere else before he looks to Christ. Nothing will bring a sinner to Christ but absolute necessity. He will try to forsake his sins. He will go to prayer meetings, and worship services, and to Holy Communion and search out if there is salvation in them. But all these, though they are useful in their places, are of no help. Engaging in works of righteousness, even Church practices, cannot help; these are all empty. They all say, "You knock at the wrong door; salvation is not in us."

Do you now utterly despair of your own goodness based on works, or do you trust in anything except Christ?

HYMN "Lord, Have Mercy"

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy on me.

PRAYER

ALL: Lord, be merciful to me. What shall I do? I dare not remain as I am, and I cannot help myself. My praying will not help me. My hearing will not help me. If I give all my goods to the poor, if I should give my body to be burned, all this would not save my soul. Woe is me. What shall I do?

PASTOR: You must let your sins go. You must let your righteousness go. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He came to seek and to save those that are lost.

Friends, will you now risk yourselves for Christ? You have this threefold assurance:

First, we have God's initiative. He has taken the first move. God the Father has appointed and sent Christ into the world to save sinners. Jesus Christ is the One Whom God the Father has made our Savior. He is redeeming and reconciling the world to Himself.

Second, we have God's command. This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Third, we have God's promise. "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and whoever believes on Him shall not be disappointed.

Now, because we have this threefold assurance of God's initiative, command, and promise, we may now be bold to risk everything for Christ and to make ourselves totally available to Him.

ALL: Lord Jesus, here I am, a lost creature, an enemy to God, under His wrath and curse. Will You, Lord, take me as I am? Will you reconcile me to God and save my soul? Do not refuse me, Lord, for if You refuse me, to whom then shall I go?

If I had come in my own name, You might well have ignored me; but since I come at the command of the Father, do not reject me. Lord, help me. Lord, save me.

I come, Lord. I believe, Lord. I throw myself upon Your grace and mercy. I trust Your saving death alone to save me. Do not refuse me. I have nowhere else to go. Here I will stay. I will trust You and rest in You and risk myself for You. On You I lay my hope for pardon, for life, for salvation. If I perish, I perish on Your shoulders. If I sink, I sink in Your ship. If I die, I die at Your door. Do not demand that I go away, for I will not go.

COMMITMENT

PASTOR: Yield yourselves now to the Lord. As His servants, give up the rule and government of yourselves to Christ. “Do not yield the parts of your bodies as tools of unrighteousness to continue in sin. Instead yield yourselves fully to God, as those who have been made alive from the dead. And yield every part of your whole body as instruments of righteousness to God.” “Don’t you know that you make yourself a slave to obey whoever or whatever you yield yourself to? You are God’s servants; obey Him! Yield yourselves so fully and finally to the Lord that, from now on, you may be only the Lord’s.

Those who yield themselves to sin and the world say in their hearts, “Sin, I am yours; World, I am yours; Riches, I am yours; Pleasures, I am yours.” Instead, with the Psalmist, let us say to the Lord:

AFFIRMATION

ALL: I am Yours. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I reverence You. I dedicate myself to Your service.

*HYMN 359 “Jesus Is Lord of All”

PASTOR: In so giving yourselves to the Lord, you affirm that you will be content that He assign you to your work.

Let Him assign you to your work. Christ has many services to be done; some are more easy and honorable, others more difficult and menial.

Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests; others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves, as when He requires us to feed and clothe ourselves. Indeed, there are some spiritual duties that are more pleasing than others; as to rejoice in the Lord, to bless and praise God. These are the sweet works of a Christian.

But then there are other works. In these we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves, as in enduring the sins and shortcomings of others, reproving others for their sins, withdrawing from their company; as in witnessing against their wickedness. Confessing Christ and His name is never easy when it costs us shame and ridicule. It is never easy to sail against the wind, swim against the tide, surrender our rights and privileges because Jesus Christ is our Lord.

See what it is that Christ expects and then yield yourselves to His whole will. Do not think of making your own terms with Christ; that will never be allowed. Let us now approach Christ in prayer.

ALL: Lord Jesus, if You will receive me into Your house, if You will accept me as Your servant, I will not come up with special terms. Impose on me whatever condition pleases You; write down Your own provisions; command me to be or do whatever You will; only let me be Your servant.

Make me what You will, Lord, and set me where You will. Let me be a vessel of silver or gold, or a vessel of wood or stone; so I may be a vessel of honor. I am content. If I am not the head or the eye or the ear - one of the nobler and more honorable instruments You will employ - let me be the hand or the foot, as one of the lowest and least esteemed of all the servants of my Lord.

PASTOR: Lord, put me on whatever task You will; place me with whomever you will.

ALL: Put me to doing; put me to suffering.

PASTOR: Let me be employed for You or laid aside for You; exalted for You or trampled on for You.

ALL: Let me be full; let me be empty.

PASTOR: Let me have all things; let me have nothing.

ALL: I freely and heartily resign all to Your pleasure and disposal.

*HYMN 379 “Take My Life and Let It Be”

PASTOR: Friends, such a commitment to Christ as you have now made is the essence of Christianity. When you have chosen God to be your portion and happiness; when you have laid all your hopes on Christ, casting yourself wholly upon the merits of His righteousness; when you have thoughtfully and heartily resigned and given up yourselves to Him; then you are Christians indeed, and never till then. Christ will be the Savior of none but of His servants. He is the Author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him. Christ will have no servants but by consent. His people are a willing people, and Christ will accept of no consent but in full to all that He requires. He will be all in all, or He will be nothing.

THE COVENANT

PASTOR: And now let us confirm our commitment by a solemn covenant, beginning with the singing of a covenant hymn.

*HYMN: "Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine"

(to the same tune as "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" by Carl G. Glazer and Lowell Mason. Words by Charles Wesley.)

Come, let us use the grace divine,
And all, with one accord;
In a perpetual cov'nant join,
Ourselves to Christ the Lord.

Give up ourselves, through Jesus' pow'r,
His name to glorify;
And promise, in this sacred hour,
For God to live and die.

The cov'nant we this moment make,
Be ever kept in mind;
We will no more our God forsake,
Or cast His words behind.

Forever we will rev'ence here,
Our God who hears our vow;
And if You're pleased, Dear Lord, to hear,
Come down, and meet us now!

To each the cov'nant blood apply,
Which takes our sins away;
And register our names on high,
And keep us to that day!

PASTOR: Search your hearts before you make this commitment to God in Christ.

First, consider what your sins are and examine whether you can resolve to let go of them all. Consider what His laws are — how holy, strict, and spiritual — and whether you can, after careful reflection, choose them all as the rule of your whole life.

Second, place yourself in the most serious frame of mind possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance.

Third, lay hold on the covenant of God and rely upon His promise of giving grace and strength, for only through these will you be enabled to perform your promise. Do not trust your own strength, but take hold on His strength.

Fourth, resolve to be faithful. Having engaged your hearts, opened your mouths, and subscribed with your hands to the Lord, resolve in His strength never to go back.

Fifth and last, being thus prepared, in the most solemn manner possible, as if the Lord were visibly present before your eyes, bow and open your hearts to the Lord.

ALL: O most holy God, we humbly beg You, accept the poor prodigals as we kneel before You. All of us were once, or are even now, far from You because of our sins. We are all by nature worthy of death, and we made ourselves a thousand times worse by our wicked practices.

But out of Your infinite grace You have promised mercy to us in Christ, if we will only turn to You with all our heart. Therefore, since we have heard the call of the gospel, we now come, throw down our weapons, and submit ourselves to Your mercy.

And because You require, as the condition of our peace with You, that we should put away our idols, we here and now from the bottom of our hearts renounce them all. We firmly covenant with You not to allow ourselves to continue in any known sin. We will, instead, conscientiously use all the means that we know You have prescribed, for the death and utter destruction of everything that corrupts us.

We humbly affirm before Your glorious Majesty that it is the firm resolution of our hearts to forsake all that is dear to us in this world, rather than to turn from You to the ways of sin. We will guard ourselves against all temptations, whether from prosperity or poverty, pleasure or pain, so that they may never draw our hearts away from You.

And since You have, out of Your boundless mercy, offered graciously to be our God through Christ, we call heaven and earth to record this day that we do here solemnly acknowledge You as the Lord our God.

And now, speaking not only as one in this sacred assembly, but speaking for myself alone, I do take You, Eternal God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — to be my God. I give up myself, body and soul, to be Your servant, promising and vowing to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

And since you have appointed Jesus Christ the only means of coming to you, I do solemnly join myself in a marriage covenant to Him.

Jesus, I come to You hungry, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, unworthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, much less to be solemnly married to the King of Glory. But since such is Your unparalleled love, I do here with all my power accept You and take You for my Head and Husband, to love, honor, and obey You before all others, even if the path leads to death.

I renounce my own worthiness and do here acknowledge You as the Lord, my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom and do here take You for my only Guide. I renounce my own will and take Your will for my law.

And since Your word has told me that I must suffer with You if I am to reign with You, I do here covenant with You to accept my lot, as it falls, with You and by Your grace to risk everything for You. It is my purpose that neither life nor death shall part You and me.

Now, Almighty God, Searcher of Hearts, You know that I make this covenant with You this day, without any known deception or reservation. I humbly beg You that if You see any flaw or falsehood in my resolve, reveal it to me and help me to put it right.

HYMN 249 “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”

ALL: And now, I praise You, O God, my Father, whom I shall be bold from this day forward to look upon as my God and Father.

Glory be to You, Lord Jesus, O God the Son, who loved me and washed me from my sins by Your death and resurrection, and Who are now my Savior and Redeemer.

Glory be to You, O God the Holy Spirit, who by Your Almighty power and inescapable presence have turned my heart from sin to God.

O Eternal, Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are now my Covenant-Friend, and I, through Your infinite grace, am Your Covenant-Servant. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

*CLOSING HYMN 366 "I Surrender All"

BENEDICTION