

## How to Abide in the Promised Land (There's no Place Like Home)

Joshua 24:14-28

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Offertory "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"

### Message

Clip from *The Wizard of Oz*

Dorothy: *Auntie Em, Really...do you know what Miss Gulch said she was gonna do with Toto . . . she said she was gonna...*

Aunt Em: *Now Dorothy, don't be imagining things you always. You always get yourself worked up into a fret over nothing. Now you just help us out today and find yourself a place where you won't get yourself into any trouble.*

Dorothy: *Some place where there isn't any trouble. Do you suppose there is such a place Toto? There must be. It's not a place where you can get yourself to by a boat or a train. It's far, far away behind the moon, beyond the rain.*

Dorothy [singing]: *Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high.  
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby...*

Dorothy [speaking to Toto]: *They'll be coming back for you now. We've got to get away.  
We've got to run away.*  
[The scene changes to Dorothy and Toto leaving home with their bags.]

Well, I think we all dream of somewhere over the rainbow, and we all wonder how to get there.

Israel certainly did, and God encouraged them to do so. Ironically, the land flowing with milk and honey was a place that they'd already been or their ancestors had already been, but to the Israelites in Egypt, the Promised Land was somewhere over the rainbow.

Two weeks ago, we preached from Joshua 6 and how to conquer the Promised Land. This week I'd like to preach on Joshua 24 and how to abide in the Promised Land.

### Prayer

Lord, I pray that we would preach your Word and that your Word would find its place in us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Joshua 23:1-6

*A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, "... it is the LORD your God who has fought for you... you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses...*

That's at least the Ten Commandments summed up in this commandment: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength." Jesus add mind when He is talking to Greeks later. Well, in 23:5 Joshua says, "You *will* possess the land..."—just as God has promised.

Then in 23:11& 16 Joshua says, "*Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God... [v. 16] If you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God... you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you.*"

So Joshua says, "God has given you the land" (period). *Therefore*, love the Lord your God with all you got. That's what theologians refer to as an unconditional covenant, or the New Covenant. It's the covenant of grace, which is entirely God's decision.

But *then* Joshua says, "If you don't love him with all you got, you will perish from the land"—that means lose the land. That's what theologians refer to as a conditional covenant, or the old covenant. It's the covenant of law, which is dependent on our decisions.

The old covenant of law, inscribed on the stone tablets of Moses, was kept inside the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered by the Mercy Seat, which is a testament to covenant of Grace.

So the covenant of law, was contained within the covenant that is grace, which means, our decisions are contained within God's decision. And God's decision is eternal.

God's decision is His Judgment.

And His Judgment is His Word.

And His Word is His Will.

Joshua 23 is weird, but Joshua 24 gets weirder.

24:1 "*Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God.*"

That clearly implies that they're standing before the Ark of the Covenant, which was the judgment seat and the throne of God. And in verses 2 through 13, Joshua recites all that God had done for Israel since the time He called Abraham to forsake his idols, and journey to the Promised Land.

In verses 14-15 Joshua says this:

*Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil (ra'a': displeasing, unpleasant) in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

Now, I think it's safe to say that this is the most cross-stitched bible verse in all the United States of America. [Image of "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" in needlepoint]

If you go down to your local Christian bookstore, you'll find shelf after shelf of this stuff.

This is the "*As for me and my house*" doorknocker.

[Image of "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" on a door knocker]

The "*As for me and my house*" welcome mat.

[Image of "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" on a welcome mat]

[Image of "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" on a rock]

This is called the "*As for me and my house*" garden rock; it's like you write your commitment in stone as a testament, and then you can place it under a tree in the garden . . .

[Image of a poster of a forest scene]

This is an inspirational poster . . .

*"Choose this day whom you will serve..."*

And then the path diverges at a tree in the woods

*"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."*

They even have a personalized wall decal. [Image of a wall decal with "As for me and my house..."] See? You get your name printed under the verse, commemorating your commitment—that you and your house have chosen to serve the Lord.

Maybe this is what we need . . .

To stand before God enthroned on the Ark of the Covenant and make a choice—about all the choices we will make in the future.

That's called a commitment. And then we could remember our commitment by writing it in a book or perhaps on a stone that we could place under a tree in a garden. It would be like a witness to hold us accountable—a covenant to help us keep our commitment: "*As for me and my house we will serve the Lord*"—Dad Gum It!

In fact, let's just do that right now.

To serve the Lord, is to keep the Law of Moses . . . summed up in the commandment of Love.

Of course, if you're a Christian that commitment is like a re-commitment. In fact, commentators often label this section of Scripture, "The renewal of the covenant." So, we could try to renew the covenant, which is to first recognize how we've broken covenant.

So: If you've committed adultery, would you please stand up.

But wait just a second, though! I want to remind you that Jesus also said this:  
"*If you have lusted after a woman, you've committed adultery in your heart*"—which is the worst place to commit it!

So: In a second I'll have you stand if you've committed adultery, or murder.

But remember, in the sermon on the mount Jesus *also* said, everyone who is angry with his brother is liable to judgment . . . the same way a murderer is liable to judgment...

So: If you've committed adultery, if you've committed murder...If you've lied.

Oh... and Jesus also said, "Don't take an oath at all." As if taking an oath, which is making a commitment, and forming a covenant, is simply a way to commemorate a lie. So, have you ever taken an oath? Maybe we should take an oath not to take an oath.

Whatever the case, Jesus summed up the Law, just as Joshua and Moses summed up the law, saying, "*You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.*"

Which means Loving anything but God, with even some of your heart soul and strength is breaking covenant and guaranteed exile from the Promised Land.

That's sin.

So, if you've sinned I'm asking you to stand up, and stay standing . . . (and if you can't stand, raise your hand). OK look around: This is you and your house. [You can be seated]

Is it not the height of ignorance and arrogance, to now stand before God and declare, "As for me and my house *we will* serve the Lord." *We* have chosen. *We* have committed. *We* have made a covenant to Love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul and all our strength?"

Isn't that basically a guaranteed lie, which we are tempted to actually commemorate with cross-stitch pillows from a local Christian bookstore? [You can be seated.]

To be devoted is to say, "Here I am," but to commit is to say, "This is what I promise to be."

And it's not only a lie about the future. I think it's the confession of guilt right now.  
If you have to commit to love, isn't that a confession that you don't love Love?  
And therefore you take vows to force yourself into loving Love...  
Or at least, acting like you do?

It might surprise you to learn, that there are no marriage vows prescribed for people recorded anywhere in Scripture. So, the strength of your marriage is not in *your* ability to make promises and keep them... but it is in someone else's ability.

In Ezekiel, God vows Himself to Jerusalem, but it's not like God didn't love her and then took a vow to make Himself love her. Through the prophets God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." That's an eternal decision that does not change. So, the covenant doesn't create the decision; the covenant is an eternal decision revealed in space and time.

But now this is my point:

If you have to take a vow to serve the Lord . . . doesn't it reveal that it doesn't please you to serve the Lord?

I have never had to take a vow to eat mint chocolate chip ice cream.  
And if I came to you and said, "I have bound myself in a covenant, taken a vow and made a commitment—I will eat chocolate chip mint ice cream." You'd think to yourself, "*How weird... And Peter must really hate mint chocolate chip ice cream... What's wrong with him?*"

If you must take a vow to serve the Lord, then clearly you find serving the Lord to be unpleasant, and something is seriously wrong with you, and me, and all humanity.

Verse 14-15

*"Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil (ra'a': displeasing, unpleasant) in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

Joshua says, "If you find it unpleasant to serve the Lord . . . then choose."

So they're free to choose and commanded to choose, but they're not free to choose the Good, for God is Good... and all their choices are evil.

Joshua says, "If you don't enjoy serving the Lord, choose whom you will serve: the idols on one side of the Jordan, or the idols on the other side of the Jordan. But choosing to serve the Lord is not an option. But choose." [Peter begins to sing] "You're gonna have to serve somebody." "Choose this day."

This word “choose” shows up a lot in the Old Testament, but as far as I can tell this is the only place it shows up as a commandment (of any significance) given by God to people.

There’s one other place, Deuteronomy 30:19 that sometimes gets translated “*choose life*,” but the Hebrew is “*You (singular) have chosen life*.” And then when you follow the threads, you learn that it’s the Word of God that’s chosen the life and that is in your heart and on your tongue—In Romans 10:8 Paul reveals it’s the Word of Faith and Faith in us is Christ in us.

Well anyway, throughout the Old Testament God does all sorts of choosing . . .  
But only here, through Joshua, does He command Israel to choose . . .  
And all their choices are evil.

Now you may say, “Hey wait a minute buster, isn’t obeying the law our choice?”  
Well, we all assume it is, but God never says that it is.  
He never says, “Choose to not eat from the tree of knowledge”  
He says, “You *will not* eat from the tree in the middle of the garden.”  
And then something utterly bizarre happens: Eve eats from the tree.  
It’s utterly bizarre because up until that point, God speaks His Word and His Word always happens; reality itself is literally the manifestation of His Word.

Well, God never says “*Choose to obey*,” just “*You will obey*.”

It’s the way the law is always stated throughout Scripture...

You *will* have no other gods before me.

You *will* not murder.

You *will* not commit adultery.

You *will* not lie.

You *will* love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself.

You *will*.

You know, I can take that knowledge of good as a law, and it will kill me, and I will be exiled from the Promised Land. Or I can receive that knowledge as a promise of grace, and maybe it will give me life.

Well, God never says, “*Choose to love the Lord your God*.”

God says, “You *will* love the Lord your God... you *will*.”

That’s His Word. And His Word is His Judgment.

Who’s judgment is stronger His or mine?

“You will love,” says God

So, if “I won’t love,” says me... is it still “me” that’s talking?

I mean, who defines “me,” God or me?

See? It’s almost as if choosing to disobey God, is choosing to not be me—myself . . .

It’s choosing not to be at home in myself . . .

It’s being exiled from my true self . . .

And isn't that ironic?

I think we're all afraid to obey for fear that we wouldn't be ourselves if we did.  
But we can only truly be ourselves when we freely choose to obey.

And yet, if we're not *pleased* to obey, we can't just *choose* to obey.  
We need a new "chooser—" a new heart.

To sum up: We can all choose to not be ourselves.

But we cannot choose to be our true selves . . .

Until someone gives us a new chooser.

You can create a false self, but you are not the creator of your true self. You are not your own creator.

In verses 15-19 Joshua says,

*And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Dang, who does this Joshua think He is?

*Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God." But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord..."*

Dang! You never see that in cross-stitch . . . at any Christian bookstore.  
A zillion Joshua 24:15s "*As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*"  
But no Joshua 24:19 "*You are not able to serve the Lord.*"

Maybe that should be on the doormat or the knocker:

*"You are not able to serve the Lord."*

If you want into the house you have to confess that

*"You are not able to serve the Lord."*

Verse 19

*But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins."*

Now that's true.

If sin is a lack of love, or lack of faith in love—God won't forgive it.

He won't allow you to refuse to love Love, forever without end.

Which means He won't allow you to remain in Hell, forever without end.

Forgive is also translated "allow" or "bear."

God doesn't forgive our sins. He forgives us of our sins.

He forgives us our sins, by destroying our sins.

He will not bear your sin. And yet, Paul writes, "Love bears all things," which clearly implies that your sin is a not a thing, but a lie about a thing, and that thing is you—the true you.

So *reality* is the manifestation of God's Word, and *sin* is rejecting God's Word, which is rejecting reality, which is rejecting your true self, which is exiling yourself into nowhere and nothingness.

It's almost as if sin were crucifying the Word of God that upholds all creation.

Sin is our choice.

And God's Word is His choice.

And which do you suppose is stronger?

Verses 19b-27

*He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey." So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth [the tree] that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us..."*

Against us... Wow... Do you see what that means?

All these cross-stitch plaques, "As for me and my house..." motivational posters, wall decals, welcome mats and garden stones, are witnesses against us.

Maybe you should get your money back!

Or trade them in for an "I'm not able to serve the Lord" doorknocker.

*And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal (or "that you deal") falsely with your God."*



So, Joshua made a covenant by taking their words, and turning them into law...  
He literally took an, “*As for me and my house*” garden stone, and set it up under a tree,  
that grew just outside the Sanctuary, where the Ark of the Covenant was housed.

It was a witness against them.

And of course, Israel was faithless and false, and was driven once again from the Land .  
. . . and once again God sent a Joshua, to lead them back into the land.

Did you know that this cross is called a tree, and it was set up just outside the  
Sanctuary, in the temple, in the city of Jerusalem? It is a witness against us that we have  
dealt falsely with our God—we crucified Him.

And now let me remind you, in case you’ve forgotten . . .  
In Hebrew, the name Jesus, is pronounced Joshua.

We chose to take Joshua’s life on the tree outside the Sanctuary.  
And Joshua chose to give His life on that same tree, just outside the Sanctuary.

We chose to reject Love, and so the cross is forever a testimony *against* us.  
But He chose to remain Love, and so the cross is forever a testimony *for* us.

We chose sin—that’s our judgment.  
And He chose grace, for He is and always was Grace; He is God’s judgment.

And so He cried “Father forgive them they know not what they do...  
They are not able to serve you Lord... father forgive them”—that is *all* of them.

And He lifted His head and surrendered His Spirit—the Spirit that descends on the  
Church and rises in us as we cry “Abba Father” and begin to take pleasure in serving the  
Lord.

See? Jesus fulfilled the demands of the old covenant in His own flesh.  
And Jesus established the New and Eternal Covenant . . . in you—as if you were the  
temple, the house of the Lord, containing the Ark—the Will and Testament of God.

Joshua says, “Israel, You are not able to serve the Lord, but as for me and my house we  
will serve the Lord.”

Who does this Joshua think he is?  
I don’t know who the historical Joshua thought he was.  
But I know who Joshua—Jesus is, and thinks He is.  
He is the Will and Testament of God, and we are His body—His house.

So the question is not “Can I choose to serve the Lord?” —You can’t.  
The question is, “Am I a member of Joshua’s house?”

But here's the rub: I can't simply choose to be Joshua's house . . . I must first be chosen by Joshua. In Joshua's day that meant one of three things:

1. I would have to be born into Joshua's house,  
Or maybe adopted into Joshua's house.

But, you see, a child doesn't choose his Father or his house.  
The Father chooses the child and becomes his house . . . or I should say his home—the child is at home with the father, and the Father's home is His child.

Jesus said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father"  
And Jesus said, "Pray our Father."  
And Jesus is the Father's choice.  
And Scripture says that we've been "chosen in Him for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."  
Gal. 4:6 "Because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts crying Abba Father." That's the Spirit of Joshua Jesus, at home in your heart.

So, to become Joshua's house,  
Joshua would have to choose to become your Father . . . or . . .

2. Joshua would have to choose to make you His bride...

On the night He was betrayed, Joshua took bread and broke it saying this is my body, and He took a cup saying this is the covenant in my blood. Joshua is God's covenant vow in body and blood. The twelve men in that room and the city in which they sat would be revealed as His bride—His harlot bride, redeemed with His blood.

3. To become Joshua's house is to become His child, His bride, or actually . . . His house.

*"You, yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house..."* 1 Peter 2:5

In the Revelation, John sees that house, which is a temple, which is a city, which is the children of God and Bride of Christ and is coming down right now. Paul writes, *"We know that if the tent [Peter points to his body], that is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have [already] a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*

See? That's our home, and Christ's home, and we already "have it . . ." now

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Julian of Norwich wrote,

*"And I was still awake, and then our Lord opened my spiritual eyes and showed me my soul in the middle of my heart. I saw my soul as large as if it were a kingdom; and from the properties that I saw in it, it seemed to me to be a glorious city. In the centre of that city sits our Lord Jesus true God and true man, glorious, highest Lord.... He sits in the soul, in the very centre, in peace and rest, and he*

*rules and protects heaven and earth and all that is...In all eternity Jesus will never leave the position which he takes in our soul; for in us is his most familiar home and his favourite dwelling.*

In her vision Julian continually talks of how homely Jesus is, and by that she means at home or familiar.

Once I had an absolutely profound encounter with Jesus and I remember being in awe of two things at once, He was so different and yet so profoundly familiar. He spoke my language. He used my vocabulary. He was so entirely familiar . . . He said, "Peter don't be a dork and stop doubting my love for you." I get that. That's my language. Maybe He wouldn't say it that way to you because it might mean something else to you. But my point is when He spoke to me, He spoke in a way I could understand.

Jesus, the Word of God and Will of God, is at home in you . . .  
The question is, are you at home in you, which is being at home with Him.

You see? There is a garden in you, and that garden is the Promised Land.

So, the question is not, "How can I get more knowledge of good and evil, so I can choose to serve the Lord, so God will grant me entrance to the Promised Land."  
The question is, "Am I at home in Joshua's house?" For if I am, I will serve the Lord.

Last weekend, I told a story at the ASA conference that I told last year at the Forgotten Gospel conference that I think is what I'm hoping to say.

Twenty-two years ago, my daughter Elizabeth was having a terrible day. She was mean to everyone and she definitely would not obey. And all day the lectures, threats, and spankings weren't making things better, but only worse.

That night I said, "Let's all go out to dinner." In the van on the way to the restaurant, she was pickin' fights with everyone in the van. After I parked the van I said,  
"OK Everybody inside, except you Elizabeth. You're staying with me."

I sat her in the front seat, stared her down and she stared back at me.

I said, "Elizabeth, what's gotten into you?"

She said, "Well, I know, but I'm not telling you..."

I didn't know what to do at that point—there was no discipline that would work, no reasoning that could penetrate her defense. She was like a little walled city. Her defiance was like a safeguard against me and my love.

"Well I know, but I'm not telling you..."

Not knowing what to do, I made her come sit on my lap . . .

And I just hugged her. At first I could tell it burned . . .

Normally, she was most at home on my lap, but now it burned . . .

It burned her ego . . .

And yet, I hugged her for a long time.

Saint Paul wrote, "It's his kindness that leads to repentance."

I just held her, for a long time, and finally she cracked, she confessed:

"Do you remember when you came to my kindergarten class?" she asked.

"Yeah, honey. I do," I responded.

(She was this little girl that had just glommed onto me.)

"Well, Daddy, she said that you said, you didn't love me anymore, and now, you loved her!!"

Then Elizabeth just fell apart in a fountain of tears... sobbing on my lap.

I said, "Elizabeth, does Kelly have a Daddy?"

"Yes," she answered, "but he just moved away from Kelly and her Mommy."

I put my hands to her face and I said,

"Elizabeth look at me."

"I will always love you, that will not change."

"Please don't doubt my love for you, for when you doubt my love for you, it hurts me."

"But when you do doubt my love for you, would you please come tell me, so I can hold you on my lap and tell you again, 'I love you!'"

I hope you know that you have a Father,

And He will not leave you nor forsake you...

He always wants you to come to him, and to remember

His body broken and His blood shed for the Love of you . . .

An eternal covenant that does not change.

"What's gotten into you?" I had asked.

Answer: A lie from hell... that creates hell... that drives a person from the garden that is their own soul.

Elizabeth was literally beside herself.

Longing for my hugs, yet resenting all my hugs.

Longing for home, and yet hating her home.

Longing for love, and yet burned by my love for she thought my love might be a lie

The enemy whispers, "The Father doesn't love you..."

That's why we preach the Gospel of Relentless Love, because "*the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases and his mercies never come to an end,*" but we have believed a lie, and even perpetuated the lie, that they do.

Well, I just held Elizabeth for a long time and reassured her of my love, until she felt at home on my lap, and then one of us said, "Hey, let's eat. We can't let Chuck E. Cheese have all the fun."

For the rest of the night we ate, we partied, I didn't have to tell her to be good; she just was good. It was her pleasure. She was home.

It's not always easy to be at home with the Lord.

Often, at first it burns . . .

But with the faith you have, just sit on your Father's lap.

Set aside time to just be at home with Jesus in the garden that is your soul.

Be at home with Him, for He is always at home in you.

"All evil stems from this," wrote Blaise Pascal,

"Men do not know how to handle solitude."

You have to feel at home with someone, to sit with that someone, in solitude.

So sometimes, I'll discipline myself to just sit with Jesus.

Often I picture myself sitting next to Him on a beach.

- And I try not to try. For all my trying is trying to get what I already have.
- I think not to think. For most of my thinking is how I protect myself from Him.  
Or try to impress Him. Or seize control of Him. And I already have Him.
- Just sitting there is a confession.
- I might say, "Jesus you know I feel so sad and I just want to get drunk." ...But I do not promise to never get drunk.
- I don't promise a thing, for He has promised everything. And . . . above all . . .
- I don't make any covenants... I rest in the Eternal Covenant.

That beach is my home . . . and it's in the garden of my soul.

If you're unwilling to sit in silence with Jesus, you're not at home in His House.

If you're unwilling to stop and sit on your Abba's lap, and hear His Word of love, you will be unable to love—and you will find yourself picking fights with everyone in the van.

If you don't receive His approval, you will be a slave to everyone else's approval, desperate for their approval, and yet, resenting their approval.

If you don't believe His Love, you will constantly crucify love trying to possess love. You will compete for love, which is just the opposite of love.

If you don't receive His Life, you will constantly attempt to take His life and so suck the life out of everyone around you.

If you don't accept His acceptance, you cannot have faith, for that is faith.

If you won't trust that you are Joshua's house, you cannot serve the Lord.

But you will serve something . . .

You will serve the idols on one side of the Jordan or the other.

They may look secular or they may look religious, but they're all evil.

Sometimes people say, "Peter are you saying, I can't choose?"

No. I'm saying that you *must* choose. Joshua even commands you to choose. There's no way that you can't choose. It's just that if nothing in you enjoys the Lord, you can't serve the Lord, which means you can't choose the Good, for the Good is the Lord.

But go ahead and choose; go ahead and serve your idols . . . until one day you find yourself at the base of a tree just outside the sanctuary and you finally see that all this time you served your idols Joshua has been serving you . . .

All this time you chose the bad; God in Christ Jesus has been choosing you.

All this time you were faithless, He remained faithful and now He suffers to give His faithfulness to you.

You see? Our life in this world is like a journey that takes us back to the place we started, but when we arrive everything is new because our hearts are new, because we've known the evil, and have been loved by the Good, and so fallen in love with the Good, and so desire to serve the Good. He is our Lord.

Serving the Lord isn't something you can *do* to gain the Promised Land. Serving the Lord *is* the Promised Land. It's loving Love. It's home.

At staff meeting this week, Kathleen said, "Hey that reminds me of the Wizard of OZ" And I thought yeah, it kind of does...

Clip 2 from *The Wizard of Oz*

Dorothy: (Speaking to the good witch) *Oh will you help me? Can you help me?*

Good Witch: *You don't need to be helped any longer.  
You've always had the power to go back to Kansas.*

Dorothy: *I have?*

Scarecrow: *Then why didn't you tell her before?*

Good Witch: *Because she wouldn't have believed me. She had to learn it for herself.*

Scarecrow: *What have you learned Dorothy?*

Dorothy: *Well, I think that it wasn't enough to just want to see Uncle Henry and Auntie Em. It's that if I ever going looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard because if it isn't there I never really lost it to begin with. Is that right?*

Good Witch: *That's all it is.*

Scarecrow: *But that's so easy. I should've thought of it for you.*

Tin Man: *I should've felt it in my heart.*

Good Witch: *No. She needed to find it out for herself.*

Good Witch: *Now those magic slippers will take you home in two seconds.*

Dorothy: *Toto too? Toto too. Now?*

Good Witch: *Whenever you wish. Close your eyes and tap your heels together three times. And think to yourself,*

*"There's no place like home. There's no place like home."*

*"There's no place like home. There's no place like home."*

[Dorothy is transported home. The scene changes to her bedroom in Kansas. Someone is putting a cold compress on her head.]

Dorothy [speaking to her friends and family back home]:  
*I remember that some of it wasn't very nice but most of it was beautiful but just the same all I kept saying to everybody was I wanna go home. And they sent me home.*

[People surround Dorothy listening and nodding their heads.]

Dorothy: *Doesn't anybody believe me?* [Responses: *Of course we believe you.*]  
*Well, anyway Toto, we are home! Home!*  
*And this is my room and you are all here and I'm not going to leave here ever again because I love you all. Oh Auntie Em, there's no place like home.*

*The End*

## **Communion**

[Holding up communion bread]

Jesus is the End and the Beginning, and He is the meaning of the story.

It's all about learning to love Love—falling in love with Love, and He is Love in flesh.  
On the night He was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying,  
    *"This is my body given to you, sweetheart. Take and eat."*  
And in the same way He took the cup saying,  
    *"This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins,*  
Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me.

We are not here to *renew* the covenant, for that is faithlessness.  
We are here to *remember* the covenant, for it is eternal.

In Scripture, The rainbow is the first sign of the covenant.  
This is somewhere over the rainbow, and in a minute or two that somewhere will be in  
you, for Christ has always been in you. He is the Word that the Father spoke into the  
dust that created you. He has been in you, waiting for you to be at home with Him.

Now, Kathleen told me that I had to say this (please stand up).  
Click your heals together three times and say, there's no place like home, there's no  
place like home. There's no place like home."

[Worship songs are sung]

### **Benediction**

May you be at home with the Lord for the Lord is already at home with you. If you have  
an "*As for me and my house...*" cross-stitched plaque on the wall in your house. Please  
don't take it down, just remember who's speaking. Jesus is speaking, and we are His  
House.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore,  
there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do  
with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this  
website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*

"We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, unremembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)



And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flames are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one."—TS Elliot