

REAFFIRMATION AT SHECHEM
June 11, 2017 Morning Service
Genesis 12:6-7; Joshua 24:1, 14-15, 24-25

This week I was out walking as I normally do in the morning and a car came by me and just went about as far as to the front pew and as it stopped I heard a little dog yapping, just flying after that car. It was just a little Chihuahua looking thing. I've seen these signs all up around our area. Somebody's looking for Snickers and I was hoping it was Snickers because there's a \$2,000 reward. I was about to grab that dog. That dog ran and the lady opened the car door and that little dog yipped up in that car. I just got there and she looked out and she laughed. I guess she knew who I was. I didn't know her. She said, "I wish I could get my husband to run after me like that." That's what she said. I said, "Well do you feed him like you feed that dog?" She said, "Oh yeah, I do." I said, "You're going to be a sermon illustration. You just mark that down right now." Amen.

Next Sunday's Father's Day and I don't know who you're running after but I hope you'll run after the Lord when you come in this place. We'll be getting ready for Father's Day and Bible School. It's going to be a grand busy time but a grand week as boys and girls come and you pray that we'll see a lot of kids grow as well as trust in the Lord Jesus.

This morning we're coming to a message that I've entitled "Reaffirmation at Shechem." Now I've been talking to you the last couple or three weeks about Israel coming out of Egypt, symbolic of salvation, wandering the wilderness, then moving across the Jordan with another miracle of God's rolling back the water, and entering into Canaan which is the fullness of the Promised Land and the victorious, spirit-filled life for every believer. That's not just for one or two. That's for all of us if we'll get across Jordan. After we've come out of our slavery and lostness, after we've moved through this wilderness wandering into Canaan, the blessed promises of God.

Joshua was the leader and in Joshua 24 we'll find him coming to his last days, to his last words. Having lived for 30 years in Canaan, he takes the people back to Shechem. What is Shechem? Shechem is where it all started in Genesis 12 which Abram, Abraham chapter 12, verses 6 and 7 you find the word of God says:

Abram passed through the land as far as the site of [What? Say it] Shechem [Say that one more time, Shechem], to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.¹

Now get the picture. God's brought Abram from Ur of the Chaldees. He's brought him into Canaan. A Canaanite was still there and he said, "This is going to be your land." He took him to Shechem and they set up a stone under that oak and said, "This marks the spot." I want to ask you today. Do you have a marker in your life? Do

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you have a marker that says, "Right there, that's when I said I will serve the Lord"? Do you have a marker? There'll be more than one but you'll go back to a beginning mark. Shechem. God said to Abram, "I'm going to give this land." And he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. So he marks the land. You know that Abraham was the father of our faith and they lived there and came sailing into slavery and out of that land they went down into Egypt. The Jewish forefathers were there and for those many, many years they were there.

Joshua was there. Joshua was in Egypt 40 years as a slave. He then walked 40 years in the wilderness as a lieutenant to Moses. He then led after Moses' death the people across the Jordan with a miraculous entrance and for 30 years Joshua led the people of God in the Promised Land. Joshua is 110 years old and we come to Joshua 24. The Bible says in Joshua 24 and verse number 1:

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel [to where?] to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. [Notice he called them together. All their leaders, all the elders and the heads of the families and the groups and the judges and all of their officers. He called them all to Shechem. Then he gave them a little history lesson and you find that because it's not really my message today but you'll find that Joshua said to them all that God had done. In verse 3, "He took your father Abraham." In verse 4, "To Isaac, I gave Jacob." In verse 5, "I sent Moses." In verse 5, "I plagued Egypt." In verse 5 he said, "I brought you out." Then in verse 8 he said, "I brought you into the land." Then he says in verse 8 about all of those wicked, "I gave them into your hand." Verse 12 he said, "I sent the hornet." That's a great study. "Then I gave you a land. I put you back in the land." Then in verses 14 and 15, after that history and Joshua said, "Now, after you remember everything God's done] Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Then verses 24 and 25 when you get down to the end: *The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice." So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance [where did He do it?] in Shechem.*

Everybody in here needs a Shechem. You need a marking place. For Abram, it started at Shechem. Joshua brought the people back to Shechem. He's at the end of his life and he's calling them to give them this word. You see, God has entered into a covenant contract with Israel and he's committed himself to God to act on their behalf. It was first made with Abram at Shechem. Their responsibilities. God said, "I'll do this," and He called on them to do this. We are in covenant today through Christ. God has made a promise to save us and He's called us into this covenant contract and there are things that are to be in our life. God is faithful and He calls us to follow but from time to

time we need to go back and renew our vows. We don't get saved again but we need to go back to Shechem and say, "Lord, this is where we started." Sometimes it's because you've drifted away from God. You need to come back to Shechem. Sometimes though you've stayed faithful to your marching orders but you need an inward renewal of fire. You're just kind of going through the right motions but you've kind of lost your steam. You just need to come back and say, "Lord, re-empower me. Fill me, blessed Holy Spirit. Anoint me. Give me unction. Lord, I'm going to come back to Shechem. This is where it started. I want to come back here."

The word Shechem in the Hebrew means the shoulder or the back, where you would carry a load. Put your shoulder to wheel. Friend, I'm here to tell you, following God is not a burdensome thing. That's not what this text is saying but there are some things that call for our persistent responsibility. Those things come to us and God never puts more on you than Jesus can handle. I have people all the time that say, "You know, God'll not put more on you than you can stand." That's a lie. As a matter of fact, He'll put more on you than you can stand to get your attention. He's in that text in Corinthians. You've got to read it in all the context. He never puts more on us than Jesus can stand. It's the God in us that gives us strength and so as it comes to our Shechem, to our back, to our shoulder and the things that we are called to do. You can't do that on your own but I'm telling you, by the power of the Holy Ghost, God gives you strength to be a persistent follower.

There are some people in this room today that have never been saved, lost without Christ. Jesus died for you and you need to mark a step today. You need to come to Shechem and say, "Lord, I'm saved today. I'm trusting you today. Come into my heart and forgive my sin." There are others here that have been saved and you need to come back to Shechem. You say, "Lord, I've been wandering out there." Some of you are saying, "Lord, I've just lost my zeal." You need to get up out of your seat. God's going to call you to do it today and come and kneel in this altar and say, "O God, I've come back to Shechem. I'm ready to get under the persistent, faithful marching orders of our great King."

When you come to Shechem, Joshua says to his people, "I'm about to be dead and gone." He's going to die at the end of this chapter. He said, "There are three things I want you to remember" and he gives us these three exhortations. Dear friend, if you're going to come back to Shechem I want you to see these things. They are found in our text in verse 14. He said, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord." There's the first one. "Serve Him in sincerity and truth and put away the gods which your father served beyond the river in Egypt and serve the Lord."

Number one, if you're coming to Shechem today, the first thing you have to do is fear the Lord. Fear the Lord. He says it right here in verse 14. Fear the Lord. Now I want to challenge you, if you're a Bible student or want to be one, I challenge you to do a word study of that little four letter word fear. It is found 400 times in the Bible. Four hundred times you'll find the word fear. We are to fear the Lord. Now be very careful that you understand what it means to fear the Lord. You say, "Preacher, I don't know if I

could find 400. Well just do a search in Psalms for fear. I want to give you five of them this morning. Just listen to the word of God.

Psalm 25:14. It's a great verse right here. You ought to memorize this verse. *The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, And He will make them know His covenant.* If you want to know the covenant of God, fear Him. Come to fear of God. In Psalm 31:19, the Bible says: *How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You.* Look in Psalm 33:18. The Bible says: *Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness.* Psalm 115:13: *He will bless those who fear the Lord, the small together with the great.* You ain't got to be some bigshot. Just fear the Lord. Then Psalm 147:11: *The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.*

Fear. Now fear is not some superstitious kind of internal deal like a black cat running out in front of you and you say, "Oh Lord." Or a fear to say, "You know, I won't walk under a ladder." That's just superstition. That's not what Bible fear is. What is biblical fear when he says to fear the Lord? I'd say it means – there's at least three parts to fear God.

Number one, it's remembering Him. You must remember Him. I'd encourage you to remember God. At every meal I'd encourage you to remember God. When you get paid this week or next week, I'd encourage you to remember God. When you get a check or they put that money in your account electronically as we do here at the church, you ought to just pause and thank God and remember Him. Every night when you go to bed you ought to remember God.

I don't know how many years ago it was I started this but every night when I crawl into bed the last thing I do before I shut my eyes is I thank God for three things He's done for me that day. They're always different. If I've been in a plane that day and I've gotten to my destination, I thank Him just for that. If I've had the opportunity to lead somebody to Christ or share with someone. This week we've been helping the family of Naomi Jones. As I said, you can put your offering out there in that bucket and we're going to help them with some things they have need of and we'll do that after the service today. I stood right out there. I joked with you last week. I don't know how many people they did a polygraph on right over here in the bride's room. I thought, dear God, that's a good thing. We ought to keep a polygraph in the bride's room. Who's ready and who's not ready?

I walked by there the other day and there was an FBI agent standing in front of the polygraph doors so nobody could get in the bride's room and the Spirit of God spoke to my heart. He said, "What do you do for a living?" I said, "Lord, I'm a gospel preacher." He said, "Here's a soul and you need to be about it." So I was able to share the gospel with an FBI agent standing in front of the bride's room. Amen. He was a Catholic man from Connecticut. We had a great conversation about the Lord Jesus. I thanked Him that night for the opportunity to be able to share with that man. You ought

to remember. Remember God at every meal, at every blessing, at the end of every day. Remember Him.

Number two, you reverence Him. Not only do you remember Him, you reverence Him. Never lose the wonder of who God is. That's what Gipsy Smith used to say. "O, God, let me never lose the wonder of who You are." I'm amazed. I see this. I'll see little children that'll come. I'm just telling you right now, we've got a kid problem at Olive. We are almost at – well we're not almost. We are at capacity in this children's building. We're going to have to move some preschoolers upstairs and some children in the fall down the hall and some of you that go to small group are going to have to give up your room at this end of the building and go find somewhere else to go. Somebody's going to have to go out there in that new building we bought out here on the corner. We bought it from the Moulton Foundation. Somebody's going to have to go out there and have Sunday School. Amen. I said, somebody's going to have to go out there and have Sunday School. You're going to be glad you said Amen when I get to point three.

I'm amazed. I'll see these little children. They just love Jesus. They love Jesus. Then I see people when they click over and they get older. I begin to see senior saints do one of two things. They either get hard and immune to God but many of them get soft and pliable the older they get. I watch that. But then there's a crowd in the middle. They get to making good money and it's like they've lost the wonder. Oh they're going through the motions but what they need to do is go back to Shechem and understand what they've got is not what they did, it's only what God did in their life. They need to get over themselves and die to themselves and say, "Lord, I'm nothing. You're all of it." They need to get back to Shechem. Amen. Instead of being so, you know, "I'm in charge of this." You're not in charge of nothing.

Friend, if God doesn't bless it, you can't run it. Give Him glory. That's how you fear Him. You remember Him. You reverence Him. Then you recognize His authority. You recognize His authority. Take your Bible. Just keep it right there in Joshua because we're going to come back there but run over to Mark's gospel chapter 4 right quick. Run to Mark 4. I want you to see this. You know this story. In Mark 4 and verse 37, listen to the word of God. Mark 4:37.

And there arose a fierce gale [Now Jesus is in the boat and there came a fierce gale] of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. [There's water. They're taking on water.] Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care [that we're going to die] that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Look at verse 41. They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

You find fear twice in that text in verses 40 and 41. You find a superstitious fear in verse 40 and you find a supernatural fear in verse 41. They were frightened and

shouldn't have been but then they were very much afraid of the one who could even calm the sea. That's that reverential awe, the recognition of His authority. Friend, that's where you've got to get to. You've got to come to the place of saying God is God and you bow before Him.

If you're going to come back to Shechem, number one, you've got to fear the Lord. Secondly, not only have we got to fear the Lord, we've got to exalt the Lord. In this text Joshua said in verse 14, "Therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth and put away the gods which our fathers served beyond the river." Put away all of the gods of Egypt. Now none of these people had been in Egypt. Everybody that had been in Egypt died but you see the residual of the family flows to the first and the second and the third generation. They knew about the gods of Egypt because their daddy and their granddaddy told them about it and they didn't forget it. Some of them were leaking back into Egyptology. You say, "Is that a word?" It is now. They had moved back into the theology of Egypt. Joshua said, "Quit. Exalt the Lord. Jehovah God. He's the only God there is. You've got to do away with those gods."

Friend, if you're going to come to Shechem there must be fresh in your life a single-minded devotion to Jesus as Lord. No other gods before Him. If you read Isaiah 46, Isaiah begins to enumerate the gods of the pagans. He said, "They have to be carried. They can't hear. They can't talk." He makes fun of them. Let me tell you, the gods of the pagans can't hear you. They can't talk. They're manmade. You see, when man begins to make god in his image he's lost his standing of being made in the image of God.

I don't know what your gods are today but we have gods of Florida and gods of America, gods of our Egypt. He said, "Put those away and exalt." Now listen to me. Everybody in here that comes and is a Bible believer believes this. That the Lord God Jehovah is the only God there is. There's not a polytheism that we pick, well, we'll take this god but not that one. There's just one God. There's just one. Jehovah's His name. Jesus Christ is the only Savior. There are not a lot of ways to get to God. There's just one way to get to God. You say, "Preacher, that's narrow-minded." It's as narrow-minded as Jesus made it.

It's been all over everywhere this week and I don't – I run from politics here a lot but when they thrust theology into the political then I've got something to say. This week Russell Voight sat before a senate hearing committee and they asked Russell Voight about a paper he wrote. This guy is up to be the deputy manager of the Department of Budget and Marketing for the United States Federal Government. Lord, who'd want to be in charge of marketing and the budget to the federal government? He's not even going to be the head. He's just the deputy director but you have to have senate confirmation and so the senator from Vermont got hold of a paper that Russell Voight had written.

You see, Russell Voight is a graduate of Wheaton College. He's a blood-bought Jesus believer. When Bernie Sanders read the paper that Russell Voight had written

about the dustup at Wheaton and Voight came out and said, “Yes, Jesus is the only way to God.” It was dealing with the Muslim issue on the campus of this great Christian college and having a Muslim professor and all of those problems that Wheaton got into with that. Voight just came out and said to his school, “Jesus is the only way. He’s the way, the truth, and the life. No man goes to the Father. Islam is not an adequate religion and they are condemned not knowing God.”

Sanders – I listened to it. I heard about it and I went back and got it and listened to it. Bernie Sanders looked right at him and said, “That’s Islamophobic.” He said to him, “You’re a Christian, I’m a Jew, but you’re saying that these people are condemned before God? Is that what you’re saying?” Oh I knew it was on tape but I was hoping he’d come on. Even if he lost his job I was hoping he’d come on. All he had to do was quote John 3:18. Jesus said, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned but he that believeth on Him is condemned already.” I wish he’d have looked at Senator Sanders and said, “Sir, if you believe not in Christ you’re condemned already.”

Those are Jesus’ words and if you’re a Christian you’re following Him. Dear friend, we are living in a day when the church must exalt Christ and Christ alone. Take no prisoners. Back up not one inch. Now what they were saying to him and what the senator then from Maryland would take up Senator Sanders a few minutes later and he said to him – and I wrote him a note this week. He went on to say, the senator from Maryland took it up and he said, “I’m a Christian and there are many ways to get to God.” I sent him a note. I said, “Just what kind of Christian are you?” You see, friend, there are not many avenues that lead to Jesus. He’s not even the best way to get there. He’s the only way to get there and if you’re going to come to Shechem you’re going to draw a line and step across it and say, “Jesus.”

You see, Jesus, He said it Himself. You can’t correct Jesus. You can’t follow Him as Lord and say, “Oh yeah but, Jesus, you were wrong about this. There are a lot of ways to get there. We’re going to love you and you can take me to heaven but some of my other friends over here, they’re going to take another route up the mountain.” Let me tell you, they’re going to fall off the mountain because if you believe not you are condemned already. Friend, that’s why the gospel is so important. Now what they thought is that a man who believed that couldn’t love people who were not like him. Let me tell you, the most loving people in all the world are to be the Christians, the followers of Christ. Why do we build hospitals? Just for Christians? No. A Muslim can get well in that hospital. I’ve been trying to find me a Muslim hospital in America. Where are the great universities from? They come out of the Bible.

You say, “Preacher, that’s just narrow.” It is narrow but Jesus called us to a straight and a narrow way that exalts Him and loves every one you come in contact with and you love them enough to tell them the truth that Jesus is Lord. That’s why when you meet an FBI agent out here you’ve got to speak His name.

Come to Shechem. Fear the Lord. Come to Shechem. Exalt His name. Number three. Come to Shechem and serve the Lord. That’s what he said at the end

of verse 14. After he said to fear the Lord and put away other gods, exalt Him, then he said, "Serve the Lord." Now the word serve is more than work. It means to pay homage. It is work and worship together. It's what he said over in verses 23 and 24 that we read. Now, therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel. The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and obey His voice."

It's work and worship. Worship and work. Work and worship. Worship and work. It's both together. It's the way you pay homage to God and then Joshua says, "I don't know what you're going to do. If you want to choose the gods of Canaan, do it. If you want the gods of Egypt, do it. If you want the gods of the Amorites, do it. But as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord. We're going to drive down a stake."

In verse 15 Joshua says these words. Choose you this day. Hear me, all of you that are in this room today. You've got to choose today. You're watching on Internet live or a broadcast. You must choose today. If you're listening on the radio, you've got to choose today. Joshua said, "Choose this day the god of this world or come and join me. As for me and my house." Joshua said, "I'm speaking for my house. We're going to fear the Lord. We're going to serve the Lord."

Yesterday I went to a birthday party for a good friend of mine. He's a part of our church. He gave his testimony to everybody that came. He said he got saved when he was nine years old and then he drifted. He said there came a day when he had to decide to possess what he was going to profess or stop professing if he was not going to possess the Christ. What he said was, "I've got to begin now to live up to what it is I've said all along."

Friend, it doesn't make two hoots in hell what you say. It makes all the difference in the world if you serve the Lord because a faith without works are dead. You've got to bring your work and your worship together. That's why we need you to be a part of Vacation Bible School the next few days getting ready. You need to sign up and be a part of that. That's why I need everybody in this room to say come August at 10:00 in the morning until 12 noon, those four Saturdays, we're going to get within the shadow of the cross and we're going to go.

Do you understand what our involvement in the death of this little girl in ministry there has done for our standing in the community and how many doors are going to be opened when you walk with that card? They're going to say, "You're the church." Yeah. God set the table. You say, "Preacher, I've never done it. I'm scared." Well get over it. You've done a lot of things you're scared to do. Fear not but fear Him. Serve. Serve the Lord with gladness. Enter into His courts with praise. Hallelujah.

Men, rise with me. Rise to your feet. Men, all over this room. Men, all the men. All the men. I'm calling you out today. You've got to take your family to Shechem and say, "As for me and my house we're going to serve the Lord."

This week I've come to conviction. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to get me three big stones and over across my pond where I go pray I'm going to put me three big stones. I'm going to put them in the ground. Then our family's going to go over there and we're going to paint our family names on those stones. Every time we walk around that pond we're going to remember. As for us, as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord. I'm going to call it Shechem. That's my Shechem. I'm going to draw a line and say, "Lord, we are in covenant," and I'm responsible. It's not my wife's job. It's my job, Lord. I'm going to lead my family. I'm going to be Joshua. As for me and my house, I'm going to serve the Lord.

Men, how about you? How about you? You ought to gather up your tribe today and say, "Alright, we're drawing a line." Some of you sit here now and you're not standing. You say, "Pastor, you know, I'm the only Christian at my house." Amen. Draw a line. Make a Shechem. It's your back. You walk through. It's not a heavy load. My yoke is easy, my burden is light, but I'm telling you, God gives you a call to persistent faithfulness and there's some things you shoulder when you lead your family to Shechem.

Every man in here is going to stand before God that's heard this message and say, "Did you ever take your family to Shechem? Did you take them there or did you just play a game and fiddle around? Come on Sunday morning. Never think about Him during the week?" Let me tell you, God's going – we're late in the game, guys. It's time to lead your family. You say, "Preacher, I've got kids that are in the far country." I understand. Draw a line. Speak truth in love. Put your arms them and say, "I love you." You say, "They're not doing what they ought to." I understand. They don't report to you. They'll ultimately give their report to the Father, just like you. Just like you.