

“RISE UP O MEN [PEOPLE] OF GOD”
Deuteronomy 11:13 Matthew 28:19-20

Do you know what a Mezuzah is? Well if you have any Jewish friends who are religious Jews and you stop by for a visit, attached to the doorpost of every religious Jewish home is a small container called a Mezuzah. This Mezuzah contains a small, rolled up piece of paper with Bible verses inscribed on it (the text of **Deut. 4:4-9; 11:13-21**). Upon entering the home, one touches the Mezuzah and then kisses his or her fingers as an expression of devotion to the verses that it contains.

Now the scripture behind the Mezuzah comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 which says, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” **(Deut. 6:6-9)**.

The Mezuzah and the physical presence of a copy of the commandments served as an excellent reminder of God's desire for his people that they would love Him with all of their heart, all of their soul, and all of their strength (**Deut. 6:5**). This visual aide reminded the people to serve and obey God in every aspect of life.

When I was thinking about what I would preach this Father's Day several weeks ago, there was an old hymn that is no longer in our hymnal because it is not "politically correct" but that hymn kept running through my mind. It is a hymn that I remember singing as a young boy and it could be found in *The Hymbook* which is the old maroon hymnbook of The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., copyright 1955. The title of that hymn is, *Rise Up, O Men of God!* It is a short hymn and the verses go like this, "Rise up, O men of God! Have done with lesser things; Give heart and soul and mind and strength To serve the King of Kings. Rise up, O men of God! His Kingdom tarries long; Bring in the day of brotherhood And end the night of wrong.

Rise up, O men of God! The Church for you doth wait, Her strength unequal
to her task; rise up, and make her great! Lift high the cross of Christ!

Tread where His feet have trod; As brothers of the Son of Man, Rise, up, O
men of God." This hymn is in several hymnals and one of them had, directly
under the title these words, "... love the Lord, your God and serve Him...--
Deuteronomy 11:13, one of our passages for today. This hymn was written
by Presbyterian Pastor William P. Merrill in 1911 and this is what Rev. Merrill
wrote in the Presbyterian newspaper *The Continent*. "Nolan R. Best, then
editor of *The Continent*, happened to say to me that there was urgent need
of a brotherhood hymn...The suggestion lingered in my mind, and just about
that time I came upon an article by Gerald Stanley Lee, entitled "The Church
of the Strong Men." I was on one of the Lake Michigan steamers going back
to Chicago for a Sunday at my own church, when suddenly this hymn came
up, almost without conscious thought or effort. **Laufer**, pp. 132-3.

Now I realize that the title of this hymn might not be politically correct today, and yet the words are a call out or as they say in the modern vernacular, a “shout out” to anyone who believes in God to rise up, to get up and become engaged in the faith. Today is “Father’s Day” but if you look at a Presbyterian Church calendar it is also listed as *Men of the Church Sunday*. You see, throughout the year, our denomination has chosen special Sunday observances. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) designates certain Sundays to recognize the Gifts that women, older adults, families, young people, and men give to the Church. Men of the Church Sunday is a day for recognizing the gifts and contributions to ministry that men make in their congregations, and give thanks for the witness that they make in the home, the workplace, community, and church. And so on this Father’s Day we celebrate the Men of the Church and thank you for your contribution to the life and ministry of the Church.

And so that this sermon is inclusive the title of my sermon, which uses the title of the old hymn written by Rev. Merrill in 1911, is intentionally changed to "Rise Up, O Men [People] of God." For the challenge for us is to rise up and be the people of God, the people that God created us to be in a day and age when the church and Christianity might not always be the "fashionable" thing. I mean, these are interesting days for the Church of Jesus Christ, in case you haven't noticed. The Church of Jesus Christ has always, I mean always been one generation away from extinction. But the beautiful thing about the people of God is that, when you read throughout history, when you read about the times of testing, when you read about the bleakest moments, whether it be for the people of Israel in the Old Testament or you read about Christianity in the New Testament or in history books, the wonderful and encouraging thing has always been this- **there is Always, there is Always a Remnant.**

There are always those faithful souls, no matter how difficult or how terrible things became, there is always a remnant that remains faithful and keeps the faithful fires burning. But the temptation is to give up, to give in, to abdicate. Those words of that British statesman of the 1700's, Edmund Burke, seem to ring in my ear and even haunt me for he said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." And to bring it home- "All that is necessary for the Christian faith to become extinct if for good Christians to do nothing." Something to think about...

Our passage from Deuteronomy that was written under the title of the hymn is really a repeat of what is written in Deuteronomy 10:12. If you have your Bible open just turn to that passage for a moment for we read, "So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

If you read chapter 11 and the 10 chapters preceding it, you will notice that chapter 11 summarizes those 10 chapters as it tells of the mighty deeds of the Lord in Egypt and in the wilderness; the promise of the land and God's promised assistance in its conquest and cultivation; warning against idolatry and its terrible consequences; the command to mediate on God's laws and to teach them to the children. And if you look to Deuteronomy 11:26-28 you read an appeal to consequences for it says that obedience will lead to a blessing but disobedience will bring a curse.

But there are two elements in our verse 13 that are important for fathers, mothers, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, anyone who has breathe because there is not a one of us who doesn't fall into one or more of these categories. For if each and every one of us would do what verse 13 suggests, think how much better off we all would be; how much better off our society, why our world would be.

And the **two things that verse 13 challenges us to do is to: 1. Love the Lord our God and 2. Serve the Lord our God with all our heart and soul.**

You see it was imperative for God to establish an effective relationship with the people He chose, the people, Israel and to do so God needed to tell them what He required. I mean for any relationship to not only make it and survive but to thrive and flourish both parties need to understand the requirements, the expectations, the commitments, whether it is in a marriage or a business venture where there are one or more partners. And so God is telling His people, He is telling us that we are to, first, Love Him. This love that God requires is not a trivial kind of love where we just say, "I Love you God," and then we go off and do our own thing. To love God means being totally and completely committed to Him, with our total being. Now can we love God perfectly, all the time? No.

We stray, we mess up, we have this desire to do things by ourselves, on our own, why, in a way, we want to be god, even though it is impossible, but it doesn't stop us from trying. But God is always waiting for us to come back to Him because even when we don't seem to have God on our radar screen and have those feelings of love for Him, He loves us and desperately wants to welcome us back into His arms, as a Father or Mother hopefully would their child who has drifted away. To love God is giving Him our full attention. What kind of "love attention" are we, have we given to God recently? Do we need to work on falling in love with God if not for the first time then again? Because He desperately loves us and wants a relationship with you and with me.

And then we are told to serve God, but you notice it says to serve Him with all our heart and soul- does it say just on Sundays? Or when we want to? Now that is a pretty big order, but friends, anything that is worth anything in life needs to have the benchmark set high so that we aren't

willing to settle for mere scraps but rather strive for the best. Friends, God's love for us is so intense, it is so genuine, it is so marvelous, it is so fulfilling that the degree of God's love for us, if we can understand even a portion of how immense it is, it would then motivate us, just like it should have motivated the people of Israel, to serve God with all our heart and soul.

Folks, I don't know about you, but I only get a glimpse of the love that God has for me when I look at the cross of Jesus and even then it doesn't quite calculate in my pea-brain mind just how vast God's love is for me and for you. Because when I get an inkling of God's love for me it inspires me, it challenges me, it motivates me, it moves me and propels me to want to serve Him with all that I am- with my heart and soul. Have you ever really experienced God's love that you felt like this, too? That is why we all need to experience God through Jesus Christ because when we get an understanding, whether it is a great or small understanding, when we get an understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He did for us and what He

does for us, then we get a glimpse of God- because Jesus is the Son of God.

And when we experience Jesus we experience the love of God and we will be compelled to serve God and in our serving God, others will come to know of our great Savior. That is what is so great about our second scripture passage today for we are told to go and make disciples of all nations,...

teaching them to obey what Christ has commanded. And for you men in the congregation today and anyone else who takes the name "Christian," for those who are committed to Jesus Christ and who seek to follow Him we are commanded to go and do exactly what it tells us to do. And so "those who are fathers, grandfathers, and uncles are involved in teaching their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. Those who are husbands are involved in making disciples as they seek to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord in their relationship with their spouses. Those who are Sunday school teachers are involved in making disciples as they teach. Those who are scout leaders model Christian values as they work with scouts.

Those who interact in the workplace and in the community demonstrate to their colleagues by the quality of their lives and relationships what it means to follow Jesus Christ. Those who volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and participate in Presbyterian Disaster Relief activities (like some of our folks did a few years ago in Gulfport, Louisiana) model behaviors that provide others an opportunity to see what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.”

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And so today we celebrate Father’s Day, and our denomination celebrates the men of the church, and we celebrate the people of God and I encourage us all to “Rise up People of God and ‘Give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of Kings.’” Amen.

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Introduction: Do you know what a Mezuzah is? Deut. 4:4-9; 11:13-21

"Rise Up, O Men of God!" written by Presbyterian pastor William Merrill in 1911

Today is Father's Day and also *Men of the Church Sunday*

The Church of Jesus Christ has always been one generation away from extinction

There is always a _____

Our passage from Deuteronomy is really a repeat of Deut. 10:12

Deuteronomy 11:13 has two things that it challenges us to do:

1. _____ the Lord our God

2. _____ the Lord our God with all our _____ and _____

To Love Him...

To Serve Him...

When we experience Jesus we experience the love of God

Conclusion: "Rise up people of God and 'give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of Kings.'"