

# Communicate for Unity's Sake

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[ 0 : 00 ] Open your Bibles to Joshua chapter 22. And I want to say thank you to my church family here for that kind gift.! Charles is right, I do not like that, but I appreciate it, I'm grateful.

I don't like being in front of people when the attention is on me. Preaching is different, the attention is not on me, it's on the word of God. You know what I mean? And so, but Charles, I appreciate that, and to the church I'm very thankful.

Received some letters in the mail this week, and very grateful for your support, and just the blessing of being the pastor here at First Baptist Lewisburg. God has never ceased to amaze Audrey and I, and we are very, very grateful.

So, thank you. We are in Joshua chapter 22, and we are going through the final section now in the book of Joshua.

The final section, and what we see at the end of this book is a handful of reminders that will guide the worship of the people of God, hopefully through the generations.

[ 1 : 02 ] Unfortunately, we know that wouldn't be the case, but the goal here is to give the people of God reminders of how to live for God in the land. Let me pray for us as we go to the word. Lord Jesus, you are good and kind.

We love you, we praise you, and pray now that your word would sink deep into our hearts. God, convict us where conviction is right. Give us your grace where your grace is needed.

And mold us into the image of your son. We love you and praise you, and it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. So, the call in Joshua chapter 22 is a call to remain loyal to God.

A call to remain loyal to God. And what unfolds in this scene is a big misunderstanding. And it's a great example of why we don't react too quickly.

Right? When we think we hear something and we assume someone's motives, we don't want to react too quickly, you know, lest we make a fool of ourselves. Right? We need to find out what people's motives are, what their intentions are, before we, you know, dive in all the way, because, especially in the church, because the goal of the church is to be a unified people.

[ 2 : 20 ] Right? To be God's people who are unified in mind, and in purpose, in witness, in mission. We should be a unified people. The same goal that we have as the church of Jesus is the goal that the Israelites had.

It was to be God's people unified. Right? Unified together. And so, what we have here is a potential blow-up. A potential civil war, actually. A pretty big deal.

You know, it's a pretty big moment. But through good communication and through faithfulness to God, we see that instead of civil war, there's unity. And I think that the outcome that happens at the end of Joshua 22 is one that we should seek to emulate whenever there's potential civil war, whether it be in our families or in the church or in general.

We should be careful to approach people with the goal in mind of unity. So, what happens is, the eastern tribes...

Let me give you a quick landscape reminder, okay? So, we have in the west... I'm going to refer to them as the guys in the west and the guys in the east, okay? So, let's just... So, you're clear. The guys in the west are the nine and a half tribes in the land of Canaan, okay?

[ 3 : 33 ] The land's been divided. They have their land. And the guys in the east are the two and a half tribes, which is Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. They're on the east of the Jordan.

So, when I say to the west, I mean to the west of the Jordan. When I say to the east, I mean to the east of the Jordan. And I want you to understand also, just geographically speaking, the Jordan River was a large barrier.

We live in a society where bridges are very, very common. We see them all the time. We take bridges for granted. In Lewisburg, every single bridge is named after somebody. Have you all noticed that?

I didn't know that was a thing. Maybe one day I can get a bridge named after me. I hope you don't have to, like, fall in right there to get the... I don't know. Anyway. Joseph's Bridge.

See ya. No, okay. Anyway. All right. We live in a bridge culture, a bridge society. So, like, it's not... We can't really conceptualize how big of a deal the Jordan was in terms of an actual land barrier.

[ 4 : 30 ] But it was. It was a huge barrier. And that's why it's the eastern tribes and the western tribes, okay? That's why the two are distinct. I'm going to read for us the beginning of Joshua chapter 22 here.

Because the eastern tribes are getting sent back home. All right. It says, Joshua summoned the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh and told them, You have done everything Moses, the Lord's servant, commanded you and have obeyed me in everything I commanded you. You have not deserted your brothers even once this whole time, but have carried out the requirement of the command of the Lord your God. Now that he has given your brothers rest, just as he promised them, Return to your homes in your own land that Moses, the Lord's servant, gave you across the Jordan.

So, this scene starts with a commendation. By the way, there's four C's that we're going to work through today. It starts with a commendation. The eastern tribes were honored publicly by Joshua for their faithful, loyal service.

All right. These are war vets. These guys have been in the fight with the rest of the tribes, helping them conquer the land of Canaan. Now, that was the deal. Remember, that was the deal that they made with Moses.

[ 5 : 41 ] It was the deal they affirmed with Joshua, that they wanted land outside of Canaan. They wanted this land to the east. And the deal was that in order to have that land, they had to go in and fight with the rest of their brothers.

Right? They couldn't just, you know, avoid fighting because they didn't want to enter the land. They had to go in and they agreed. They agreed wholeheartedly, passionately, that they would faithfully fight, that they would stay through the whole thing.

And they had. And so they were commended. And by the way, just a quick reminder, when people are faithful in their work, we should commend them publicly.

Right? We should be grateful when people are faithful in their service to God as they said they would be. But it goes from a commendation into a command. So look with me at verse 5.

Verse 5 says, Only carefully obey the command and instruction that Moses, the Lord's servant, gave you to love the Lord your God, walk in all his ways, keep his commands, be loyal to him, and serve him with all your heart and all your soul.

[ 6 : 46 ] So this verse, this command from Joshua, is kind of the roadmap for faithfulness or loyalty. All right? And it was the roadmap for the eastern tribes.

When they went home, if they wanted to remain faithful to the Lord, if they wanted to remain loyal to God, this is how they would do it. Right? First step, if you want to remain faithful to God, love God.

Right? Love God. It seems basic, but it's a good reminder. You know, love God. Because then it goes into walking all of his ways and keep all of his instruction, his commands.

And those are great things, to walk in the ways of the Lord and to follow and obey the commands of God. But if you follow the commands of God but don't love God, you've sunk into what we call legalism.

Right? You're trying to achieve a standing with God based on how well you keep his law, how well you keep his word. There has to be a passion, a love for God that motivates your obedience.

[ 7 : 46 ] That motivates you to walk in his ways. Right? So if you want to be a person, this is still true today. If you want to be a person who's faithful to God, who's loyal to him, the way to do that is love the Lord.

And then out of that love for God, walk in his ways. Obey his commands. Be loyal to him. And then serve him with all your heart and all your soul.

By the way, that sounds a lot like the Shema in Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 5. Listen, Israel, the Lord is one. The Lord your God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Joshua's kind of pulling the natural result of a deep love and devotion for God, which is to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. In Colossians and in 1 Corinthians, we see in the New Testament the admonition to whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God.

Right? Everything that we do has to be coded in this deep love for God. So we have to pause for a second and consider, do you have a deep love for God?

[ 8 : 54 ] What motivates your church attendance? Is it a deep love for God? What motivates your volunteer service? Is it your love for God?

If it's anything but your love for God, I would encourage you to do a heart check and pray that you would grow in your love for God.

Right? Because at the very base, if you want to be someone who is loyal and faithful to the Lord, it has to start with a love for Him. It has to begin with a love for Him. He loved us so that we may love Him back.

Right? So love the Lord first. So we have the commendation and we have the command. By the way, if it seems like I'm working through this text fast today, it may not.

But if it seems that way, I want you to know I've practiced, I've preached this text like four times this week and I haven't gotten it under an hour. So we'll see what, no, I'm just kidding.

[ 9 : 52 ] It hasn't been under 35 minutes though. And I'm wasting time right now by making jokes. Okay. Anyways. We'll be fine. Look, it's only 10.02.

Don't look at the clock. Okay. Alright. So Joshua blessed them and he sent them on their way.

Okay? He gave them a great blessing actually. He says, return to your homes. This is verse 8.

Return to your homes with great wealth, a huge number of cattle and silver, gold, bronze, iron, and a large quantity of clothing. Share the spoil of your enemies with your brothers. They earned it.

They earned the spoil of war.

They came and fought and now they get to go home blessed. They get to go home with the reward.

It's a great blessing. And so they head out. They head on their way. And verse 9 says, The Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in the land of Canaan to return to their own land of Gilead, which they took possession of according to the Lord's command through Moses.

We're about to approach the third sea. We have the commendation. We have the command. And now we have a concern. It's a very real concern, by the way. Verse 10. When they came to the region of the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh built a large, impressive altar there by the Jordan.

[ 11 : 07 ] Then the Israelites heard it and said, Look, the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan at the region of the Jordan on the Israelite side.

When the Israelites heard this, the entire Israelite community assembled at Shiloh to go to war against them. Now we might hear this and wonder, why in the world would they assemble for war over something like this?

It doesn't quite make sense. But we have to understand that in God's law, He had given the Israelites very clear instructions on worship. Very clear instructions because they were supposed to be holy.

That is, set apart. They weren't supposed to look like the rest of the inhabitants, the previous inhabitants of the land of Canaan. So because God had called them to this holy, set apart form of worship, that meant that there was only one authorized place for sacrifice.

It was at the altar, which was with the tabernacle, or the tent of meeting. Remember, the tabernacle was this mobile tent, and eventually the temple would be built in Jerusalem, but that wasn't until Solomon's reign.

[ 12 : 18 ] At this point, the tabernacle is still in Shiloh, where Joshua and Eliezer the priest had set it up to divide the land. So what that means is, there was only one authorized place to offer sacrifice, one authorized altar for God, and that was in Shiloh.

So when the people of Israel in the west heard about this altar that the people in the east had built, they were really, really concerned. They were concerned that their brothers were guilty of apostasy, that they were beginning to worship like the inhabitants of the land.

The Canaanites had altars all over the place, one for a God here, one for a God there. They had them all over the place. And so the Israelites in the west were terrified that their brothers have

forgone the command of the Lord, have committed this act of covenant unfaithfulness, and were preparing to really defile the entire land.

It was a big deal. It was a huge deal. So big, in fact, that they gathered together to go to war. Which, by the way, we should hold people accountable when they're walking in sin, right?

This is a good picture for us to take note of, of what it looks like to hold people accountable, brothers and sisters in Christ, when they begin to walk in sin, or it begins to look like it, right?

[13:44] We have to hold people accountable in love. So they gathered for war, but they didn't go swing the sword yet, all right? They wanted to hold their brothers accountable. If they were going to sin, then they were going to bring defilement across the whole land.

And the brothers and sisters in the east were at as big of a risk as those in the west. And so they were concerned. They were concerned, and they wanted to hold each other accountable.

You know, we take two lacks of a position on sin often in our day. We have people in the church, right? Like, this is not First Baptist Lewisburg, necessarily. If you feel convicted, we can talk after. But in the church today, we let people live as if they're part of the world. We don't hold them accountable because we don't want to hurt a friendship. We don't tell them in love that they're walking in sin.

We're not concerned as much for their eternal well-being with God. Instead, we're concerned with keeping face. This is called fear of man, right? We're scared of what might come from holding people accountable.

[14:50] Let the Israelites in the west serve as an example that when we see a brother in sin, we should hold him accountable in love. Hold him accountable in love.

It goes on. Verse 13 through the, well, verse 29, really. The people in the west send a delegation over. Phineas, the son of Eliezer, is now probably the high priest.

And Phineas takes this delegation of leaders, tribal leaders, into the land of the east to have a conversation and figure out what happened. And this is what it says here in verse 16.

This is what the Lord's entire community says. What is this treachery you have committed today against the God of Israel by turning away from the Lord and building an altar for yourselves so that you are in rebellion against the Lord today?

See, the concern of the brothers in the west was that they had become disloyal. They had become unfaithful in the east. That they were no longer loyal to God.

[15:53] Which, remember, this was Joshua's admonition to them. His command was to be loyal. So they were concerned that those in the east were unfaithful or not loyal to God.

Verse 17, wasn't the iniquity of Peor which brought a plague on the Lord's community enough for us? We have not cleansed ourselves from it even to this day.

And now you would turn away from the Lord. If you rebel against the Lord today, tomorrow, he will be angry with the entire community of Israel. So Phineas, real quick, let me pause here, verse 18, beginning of verse 19.

Phineas is a no-nonsense guy, okay? I was talking to a friend of mine about this passage this week and he said, I don't know how many people are going to get this reference. Phineas and Ferb, anybody watch that TV show? It's a kid's show.

More adults recognize it than I thought. Hey, awesome. Anyway, no, it's not Phineas and Ferb. This is Phineas. He's the high priest. Phineas was taking, was a no-nonsense kind of guy, okay?

[16:52] So he brings up this iniquity at Peor, okay? Which, if you want to understand that, we have to go back to Numbers 24, 25. Basically, here's what happened. The Midianites had sent in cult prostitutes among the camp of Israel.

The men of Israel were sleeping with the Midianite prostitutes and had fallen into Baal worship. It was an abomination, right?

God sent a plague into the camp. 24,000 people died because of this plague. It was a big deal. And Phineas was the guy who, for all intents and purposes, put an end to this plague because he saw an Israelite man bringing a Midianite woman into his tent.

And he went in with a spear, Numbers 25, you can read it, and speared them both through. And because of his zeal for the Lord to protect the community from further sin, further iniquity, God actually gave Phineas a blessing of perpetual priesthood and a blessing of peace.

So Phineas was a no-nonsense guy. Look, I'm willing to bet that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh remembered that story. So when Phineas showed up, they were like, oh

my goodness, this is serious.

[18:06] This is serious. And Phineas was really serious about it. He said, look, if you are going to sin in this way, then today you'll sin. And tomorrow, God will bring his wrath, his punishment across the entire people of Israel, the entire community.

And then verse 19, he says, But if the land you possess is defiled, cross over to the land the Lord possesses where the Lord's tabernacle stands, and take possession of it among us.

But don't rebel against the Lord or against us by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of the Lord our God. Wasn't Achan, son of Zerah, unfaithful regarding what was set apart for destruction and bringing wrath on the entire community of Israel?

He was not the only one who perished because of his iniquity. In other words, what we see in Peor and what we saw in Achan, remember Achan in Joshua chapter 7? After the battle of Jericho, he took what was set apart for destruction, took from what was set apart for the Lord.

He kept it for himself. He stole and he lied. And then when the people of Israel went to fight at the small city of Ai, they were defeated in an embarrassing defeat.

[19:14] People died because of Achan's sin. And then his family was stoned with him. I mean, the iniquity of one man caused the death of many people.

The point here that Phineas is making is that when only a few or even only one person sins, it impacts the entire camp of God's people. Same thing's true in the church. If we have people who are church members who are living in sin, unrepentant sin, that impacts the entire community. We like to think that our sin is private, that it's only our problem, right? Nobody needs to know about this struggle. But there's a reason that God calls his people to such a tight-knit community and accountability. It's because the sin of one impacts the entire camp.

It impacts the entire people. But look at this, too. In verse 19, the way that Phineas approached this issue was with a genuine heart of restoration.

Whenever we approach someone who's in sin and we're seeking to hold them accountable, we have to approach them with a genuine heart of restoration. Because Phineas says, look, if you've already defiled the land, if you've already offered these sacrifices that are unsanctioned, if you've already messed up, then please get out of this land and move in with us in the West.

[20:35] Essentially, he's saying, look, we will give you our own inheritance if it will keep you from further sin. That's how serious sin was. That's how serious sin was in the camp.

And again, we take a lax view of sin. Instead of offering sacrificially to help people find their way out of sin, we'll just hold them accountable. And then, you know, well, I told them, so that's good, right? I think it's unbiblical to hold people accountable without helping them walk through the restoration of leaving sin behind. That's what Phineas was setting out to do.

Let's restore you to right fellowship. Let's restore you to right worship. So if you've already defiled the land, then get out of it. Stay out of the land. In other words, look, the people in the West were concerned.

They were concerned that not only were the people in the East unfaithful, but that God was going to bring about divine judgment upon all of them. I would have been concerned too.

[21:35] That's a concerning proposition. But we're going to turn our attention now to the guys in the East because they also were concerned. The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the heads of the Israelite clans, the mighty one God, the Lord, the mighty one God, the Lord.

He knows, and may Israel also know. Do not spare us today, if it was in rebellion or treachery against the Lord, that we have built for ourselves an altar to turn away from him.

May the Lord himself hold us accountable if we intended to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings on it or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it. We actually did this from a specific concern that in the future, your descendants might say to our descendants, what relationship do you have with the Lord, the God of Israel?

For the Lord has made the Jordan a barrier between us, and you, descendants of Reuben and Gad, you have no share in the Lord. So your descendants may cause our descendants to stop fearing the Lord.

See, the Eastern tribes were willing to be held accountable. Willing to be held accountable by God and willing to be held accountable by their brothers. Look, if we're misleading you, if we're lying, if our motivations are false or impure, then may God bring judgment and may he use you to bring it.

[ 22 : 57 ] Right? That's essentially what they told them. But then they explained, we were not setting out to worship God in any false way, any unsanctioned way. They had a concern for the loyalty of their tribes to God well into the future.

We should take another point from the Eastern tribes here and be concerned for future generations that they would remain faithful to God. They were scared that their descendants would be forgotten. That eventually they would be cast out. Eventually they would have no share in worship and sacrifice. And they knew the importance of sacrifice. They knew the importance of gathering together at the altar of the Lord.

And so they were concerned for their descendants. That's a fair concern as well. And there's an irony here in this whole story. On the one hand, the Western tribes were concerned because, well, if these guys are apostatizing, if these guys are turning from God, then we're going to have to fight them.

And on the other hand, the Eastern tribes are concerned because, well, if those Western tribes get mad at us, they're going to cut us off from the sacrificial system. We won't have any standing with God. Our descendants will be left out.

[ 24 : 10 ] That's not a good thing. Neither of those were good things. But look at the way that they were held accountable, okay? When someone does hold you accountable, if they assume that you're living in sin and you know yourself not to be, and someone holds you accountable, you should approach it, we should approach it as humbly as these Eastern tribes did.

They were humble in their response. They didn't get mad at the Western tribes for coming over to talk to them. I would imagine they would have been pretty mad if the Western tribes had come over ready for war.

That might have gotten them a little bit angry. But because they came to communicate, because they sought peace, because they sought to understand a misunderstanding, the Eastern tribes responded humbly.

So when we find that a brother or sister in Christ is in sin, we should approach them with a heart of kindness and restoration and love, right? That we're trying to direct people back to pure worship. And when we are approached and held accountable, we should respond humbly, right? We should respond humbly and go back to them and fully explain the whole circumstance, right?

[ 25 : 20 ] You know, it's a sad thing when misunderstandings get blown out of proportion. Because at the end of the day, both of these tribes, or both of these groups of tribes in the West and in the East, they wanted the same thing.

They wanted pure worship in the land. They wanted true worship in the land. And you've heard about churches that have split over the color of the carpet, right? I mean, at the very least, you've heard jokes about it, right?

I mean, here's the thing. What happens in those situations, the carpet is just an example, but what happens in situations where churches split over trivial matters, like the color of the carpet, or, you know, you name it, the size of the church sign, I don't know, whatever people split over, right?

The issue is that we elevate trivial things to that of essential doctrine, right? We have a hard time telling the difference between our preference and what God has actually prescribed for worship. And we have to be careful there. Because if the tribes in the West had been so adamant that what the tribes in the East had done was an affront and an offense to God and fought them and broke out civil war over this, they would have been wrong.

[ 26 : 39 ] They would have been sinfully wrong. Likewise, if the tribes of the East had been offering sacrifices at the altar wrongly, they should have been judged.

So here's the thing. Whenever we have these issues in the church today, we have to be really careful to keep what is essential as essential and what is non-essential as non-essential, right? So carpet, non-essential.

This carpet could be pink, okay? I mean, it could be, it doesn't matter. Actually, I heard a story once of a church who argued over the carpet color so much that they made the decision that the carpet was going to be hot pink as a reminder every time they walked inside that they were arguing over something so trivial.

I think there's probably better reminders. A little plaque might have been good, but, you know, to each his own, I guess. At any rate, it's important to keep the essential matters essential and the non-essential matters non-essential.

Because what the goal is is pure worship, unified worship, right? Where the people of God are able to worship God together. So when there's a stylistic preference, that's not essential.

[ 27 : 46 ] It might hinder you from being as comfortable as you would like to be, but it shouldn't hinder you from worshiping God freely. Where stylistic preference is, there is not necessarily an essential.

Now, on the essentials, we have to be sure, right? If someone wants to join our church and rejects the doctrine of the Trinity or the divinity of Christ or, you know, the work of the Holy Spirit and salvation, you can't join the church, right?

Like, there are essential matters, right? There are essential matters, and there are non-essential matters. And in this case, having a sign, having a witness between the two tribes so that these two and a half tribes in the east weren't forgotten, that was a non-essential matter.

They believed them. They believed that they weren't there to worship God falsely, and so they accepted it, and they moved on. Because look at what happens next. There's almost a celebration here. It's starting in verse 30.

It's when the priest Phineas and the community leaders, the heads of Israel's clans who were with him, heard what the descendants of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased. Take people at their word, right?

[ 28 : 51 ] Test them. When people look like they're walking in sin, test them. Test them compared to Scripture, and ultimately take them at their word until proven otherwise, right? If they had taken the Reubenites and the Gadites at their word, and then they had gone on to offer sacrifices, they would have proven themselves to be liars, and then the Civil War would have been justified.

But take people at their word. They were pleased. In verse 31, Phineas, son of Eleazar, the priest, said to the descendants of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, today we know that the Lord is among us because you have not committed this treachery against him.

As a result, you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord's power. So unity among God's people is found when God's people are corporately faithful to him.

We can be unified when we are faithful to God on the essential matters, right? We can be unified in our worship even when style may not match our preference because we are set on the essentials, right?

And the same thing was true here. And in fact, there's this celebration because, look, Phineas says, look, today we know that the Lord is among us. You could see God's presence in the faithfulness of God's people.

[ 30 : 06 ] Because God's people were faithful, let's take it a step further, because God's people were faithful, God protected them from his wrath, from his punishment. And so in all of that, you see that God is present.

God is at work in the lives of his people. Isn't it a joy to find unity among the saints? So when God's people are faithful to him, they are preserved from his wrath.

And then when the debate is settled, when everything, when the dust clears, let it go, right? That's the last, you know, part of the story here. Let it go. Look at what they do here in verse 32.

The priest Phineas, son of Eleazar, and the leaders returned from the Reubenites and Gadites in the land of Gilead to the Israelites in the land of Canaan and brought back a report to them.

And the Israelites were pleased with the report, and they blessed God. They spoke no more about going to war against them to ravage the land where the Reubenites and the Gadites lived. Notice what they didn't do.

[ 31 : 07 ] They didn't go around gossiping about how they thought that the Reubenites and Gadites lied. They didn't go around telling other people, hey, we can't go fight them. We're not allowed to.

But if you did, you know, our neighbors, that'd be fine. They didn't go on any further. They let it go. They trusted that God was at work in their brothers and sisters to the east, and they let it go.

They let it go. So let it go, right? When there are stylistic preference issues that make us so anxious and worked up, and our way isn't the way that we go, we have to just let it go.

Like, we have to be gracious. We have to be kind. We have to be patient and trust that the goal is unity and pure worship of God, right? Now, where there's essentials, again, be strong.

And where there's non-essentials, be gracious. They blessed God. They were able to praise the Lord because God was at work in the brothers to the east.

[ 32 : 15 ] They were able to bless God because there was no need for fighting. There was no need for civil war. Fighting battles that don't need to be fought is sinful. And destroying the faith of those who are being faithful to God, even if things are expressed differently than you would like, is vile, abhorrent.

If they had fought and destroyed the faith of the tribes in the east because of a preference, they would have been sinfully wrong. But God is faithful.

And we should be gracious as he's taught us, as he's shown us through his word. I want to close with this. I want to show you a few ways in this passage that we really see this whole scene pointing us ahead to Jesus.

And there's a few ways. And if you notice more as we've gone through this passage today, please share them with me because this is really encouraging whenever we talk things out after the sermon. I love that. But there's a few ways that this passage points us ahead to Jesus.

All right? So the first way that I notice as I'm going through this that this passage points us to Jesus is back in Joshua's command to the people to love the Lord your God, walk in all his ways, keep his commands, be loyal to him, and serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

[ 33 : 29 ] That points us to Jesus in a couple of ways. Number one, Jesus did that perfectly. Jesus did that exceptionally, without fail. And number two, when Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was, Matthew 22, Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was, what did he say?

Most and greatest commandment. I think that I heard. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And that's right. A plus, whoever that was. But, yes, Jesus' answer for the greatest commandment, a.k.a.

What does it look like to love God? What does it look like to serve God and keep his law? It means that you love God supremely. Right? Jesus saw that as the greatest commandment. And we should, too.

We also see a picture of Christ in the way that Phineas went as a mediator between the tribes. Instead of letting the, you know, the people who were really worked up and ready to fight go in and try to handle this situation themselves, Phineas stepped in between and he went to seek resolution. To seek restoration. Jesus is, one, our great high priest, the eternal high priest. And, two, mediates between us and the Father so that he perfectly communicates our innocence because of his shed blood to God the Father.

[ 34 : 49 ] Jesus is our mediator, ensuring that our salvation is communicated to the Father. The same way that Phineas took a report back to the West, Jesus takes a report of our salvation to the Father.

Now, the tribes in the East, they set up this altar. They said they set it up as a sign. They set it up as a sign. Well, here's the thing. Their concern was that they would be lost, that they would be forgotten, that they would be cut off.

And in Jesus, he is our sign. Right? He is our sign. He is the only sign that we need to show that we are faithful and in him. Right?

So, we have a constant sign. And he gives us even more. He gives us his spirit to live within us. And then, finally, I want you to understand Jesus is our hope.

Because as best as the people of Israel tried to be unified in worship, if you turn the page and read the book of Judges, you find that that didn't last.

[ 35 : 46 ] Unity on earth doesn't last. How many churches have split over trivial matters? But we have hope that in Jesus Christ, our salvation, we will, in unified chorus, sing praise to him for all eternity.

Now, that doesn't mean that there's going to be a room for the Baptists in heaven and a room for the Church of Christ and a room for the Methodists and whatever other denomination you can think of right now.

It doesn't mean that there's separate rooms and we all live stream a view of Jesus and we worship. No, no, no, no. We are going to worship God eternally in unity. Why? Because in heaven, the essentials will be known and celebrated.

And the non-essentials will be forgotten. So we have hope in Christ. And here's the thing. If you don't have a relationship with Jesus, then that hope is not yours.

That hope does not persist. So, I'm going to pray for us and we're going to sing a closing song. And then if you have questions about what it means to follow Jesus, or you have questions about that future hope in eternity with him, please come speak with me.

[ 36 : 57 ] Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, you are good and kind. God, we pray now that you would just continue to move in this place. God, that you would sink your word deep into our hearts as we prayed before.

God, help us to grow as we've studied. Help us to grow as we go out in this week ahead. Help us to live as witnesses for you. We love you and praise you, and it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.