**Exodus 24:3–8** Moses came and reported to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances. Then all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do.” 4Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He got up early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He set up twelve memorial stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5He sent young Israelite men, who offered whole burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings of cattle to the Lord. 6Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and he splashed half of the blood on the altar. 7He took the Book of the Covenant and read it out loud to the people and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do. We will obey.” 8Moses took the blood and splashed it on the people. He said, “Look, here is the blood of the covenant, which the Lord made with you by means of all these words.”

Remind you of anything? That’s right, does our text remind you of anything? Especially the part about the people promising faithfulness. It is actually pretty exciting to hear this history and it is absolutely inspiring to hear the entire assembly of people say: **“All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do.”**

I am also equally impressed by how Moses does things to impress upon the people what is going on, because you know there are those who aren’t paying attention but are still making promises to the Lord. So the first time they make the promise is after Moses simply gives them a report on his meeting with God and on the laws that God had given to him. The first promise was kind of a general thing. Then Moses builds altars, sacrifices burnt offerings to the Lord and reads the entire Book of the Covenant to the people. In other words, he wanted to make sure they knew exactly what it said. He assembled everyone and read the entire law to make sure they heard what God says. To top that off, he then sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on all the people (you have to grasp that Moses had the youth as assistants in all of this) blood, to remind them that this covenant was all about pointing ahead to the one death, the one sacrifice that would atone for sin and grant eternal life and salvation.

Again, the people respond: **“All that the Lord has spoken we will do. We will obey.”** They knew everything. They had been taught, instructed, anointed and awed by everything that took place and they made this promise, this important and lifelong promise of faithfulness to the Lord.

Just like you and I have done! That’s right, each and every one of us as members, communicant members of this church, have indeed made such a promise to the Lord. For that matter, in our lifetimes as Lutherans we will maybe make two lifetime promises to the Lord. One is our marriage vow where we promise to be faithful to our spouse and Lord till death do us part. The other is our confirmation when we promise simply to be faithful to the Lord even unto death!

Now I don’t know about past servants of the Lord here but the fact of the matter is that I make sure: a: you know what the Catechism says. I make sure of that because our Lutheran heritage tells us that the Catechism is the very least that every Christian should know about Bible teachings. The least! It is to be the beginning of your life long faithful study of God and what God has said and revealed. And then there is b: I make sure you know and hear the very vows that you will be making for your confirmation. I go through them and discuss them with you. I beg you that if you have no intention of being faithful, then don’t make this promise because I think making this promise and then later on breaking it is far worse a sin! I base that idea on what is found in Hebrews 10:26-29. **“For if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains any sacrifice for sins. Instead, there is a fearful expectation of judgment and a raging fire that is going to consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses was put to death without pity, on the basis of the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much greater punishment do you thing will be deserved by the person who trampled the Son of God underfoot, who considered insignificant the blood of the covenant, by which he was sanctified, and who insulted the Spirit of grace?”** So at your confirmation, not only did you know the basics of the Catechism, but you then promised to be faithful to the Lord, yeah, you would rather die than fall away from faith and Jesus!

That’s pretty important stuff. Let’s think about all of this and do so under the simple theme: **HEY, WHAT ABOUT YOUR PROMISE!**

So here are the Israelite people promising to obey, to follow the Lord God. Mind you, these are the people who have now been witnesses to: all the miracles of Moses, the Ten Plagues upon Egypt including the Passover and the death of all the firstborn if you did not have blood on your doorpost! They were direct recipients of Egyptian goods, the Egyptians so eager to get rid of them, were willing by the hand of God to give them whatever they asked for. These are the people who saw the pillar of cloud by day and that same pillar ablaze at night, that pillar there every day guiding them. They saw the sea parted, walked on dry land between two walls of water to safety and then watched the Egyptian army drown. They got all their water from a rock, came to the Mount of God and saw it covered with cloud, with thunder and lightning and trumpet sounds coming forth. They heard the voice of God speak to them! And yes, just as our text revealed, even the Elders got to meet with God and have a feast!

Why all of this? Because there was to be no doubt among the people about the reality of God and the power of God. There is no doubt as to God’s majesty and wonder as God acts, moves and communes with his people in a unique and very real way. Even the common people, those who did not get to go up and actually be in the presence of God, they had seventy-four people they could speak with to verify the reality and person of God!

Here is the sad fact. It is this generation of Israelites that will wander in the wilderness for 40 years because they did not carry out what they promised. They did not trust God. They did not marvel in his majesty and honor his name. They are refused entrance into the Promised Land (and heaven) because of their unbelief and rejection of God! Seeing is not believing! Disobedience is not Godly. Turning away from the Word is not faith! So while we see and hear their promises to the Lord in this text, the historical reality of their unbelief is clearly known.

Are we any better? Well, that depends. Truth is we have “seen” the glory and awe of the Lord in His Holy Word. We have seen his promises fulfilled and His Savior sent. We have been witness to the love of Jesus as He comes into our world, lives a perfect life and then goes to the cross to die for our sins. We have been witnesses of how the blood of the One sacrifice from God has atoned for us and the whole world. We are recipients of the truth of God’s salvation because of the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, because Jesus lives just as God had promised he would after his dying. In many cases, we are receivers of God’s goodness and grace as we partake of the Gospel in Word and sacrament. If you would, it is a little mini banquet celebration with the Lord nourishing our faith and feeding our souls that we might be strengthened to remain faithful to Him. In other words, just like the Israelites, God has taken care of everything needed that we might be his people and children of life.

And just like the people before us we have (those of you confirmed) promised to be faithful, promised to believe and obey the Lord our God!

But have we? Are we faithful and true to our vow? Is the Lord our God the most important thing in our lives? Or do we let family (like children) become more important in our hearts, serving them more than God. Or is it money and goods, house and job, mattress and sleep, and all sorts of other things of our lives that we have put before God? Do we let these things push God from our lives? We have made worship and praise easier than ever and still many, who promised faithfulness, don’t bother with such things. I could go on and on. I could speak about the other nine commandments and how we have broken, shattered, despised, disobeyed and rejected this written and clear will of God for our lives. You see, if you hear about these Israelites and their problems of faith and then scorn them, please note that in truth you and I are really no different and no better. In truth, we have been just as spiteful, disobedient and callous to our God and the promise we have made to Him for faithfulness!

Yet we have one gigantic and awesome thing in our favor. We have the complete truth and revelation of Jesus! Jesus came because the Israelites could not obey, actually no man can! Jesus came because we could not and do not keep ourselves pure and holy before the Lord God. Jesus came to be our Savior, to do everything for us that we might inherit His gift of eternal life and salvation. Here is the difference, Jesus and the complete revelation of the Gospel.

There were those in the Old Testament days who got that it was about the Savior to come and the forgiveness He would bring. They understood that the Ceremonial laws pointed to the Messiah to be and his forgiveness. They understood the symbolism of the priesthood that pointed to the intercession of the Savior for their souls. They understood they wanted to but could not obey unless they had the blood of the Lamb in their lives. The small group of the faithful, who travel the narrow path, God’s path and truth.

It is still the same today. Our faith is not about how good we are or how much better than others we are. Our faith is not about what we do and accomplish but rather about God’s grace and love in Jesus. We (and a group of Israelites) believe and trust in the Lord our God and His Son our Savior Jesus.

We are faithful Moses who grasp the greatness and goodness of God.

We are the seventy-elders, graced to be witnesses of God’s majesty and heaven. Graced to be called by God and have our hearts opened to his love.

We are the common believers, who have experienced in God’s Word the goodness and blessings of God for our souls sake. We grasp how the blood atones, how the Spirit opens our eyes and fills our heart with grace. We are the crowds before Jesus fed miraculously and awed at his grace and compassion for us. We are the faithful disciples who hear his words and rejoice that salvation is ours. We are those who hear the call to repent, to change our mind about sin and with God’s help to stop that sin just because Jesus asks us to. We are those who grasp that without God’s gift in Jesus we have nothing and are nothing when it comes to eternal life and salvation.

We are the reality of what our Epistle lesson said! “**He himself gave…the pastors and teachers, 12for the purpose of training the saints for the work of serving, in order to build up the body of Christ. 13This is to continue until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, resulting in a mature man with a stature reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ. 14The goal is that we would no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, when people use tricks and invent clever ways to lead us astray. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.”**

So what about our promise? It is fulfilled in Jesus. Let us marvel at the grace and goodness of God, who demonstrated this grace even to his Old Testament people and still carries this grace and mercy to us in Jesus. Jesus who forgives us. Jesus who calls us to repent and because of Jesus we hear. Jesus who in compassion knows our weaknesses and foibles and still loves us all the same. Jesus who continues to send upon us the saving Word that our faith and our salvation remain firm and steadfast in His promises. The key is to not think sin your right, but to grasp that Jesus is our right, our hope, our confidence and our life.

What about your promise! It is kept in Jesus! With faith in Jesus I have the forgiveness of sin and I am counted faithful before the Lord. That is the power of God before us! Amen.