# Covenant Renewal Sunday Sermon Outline

Scripture: Romans 11:33-12:13

Subject: God shall have all there is of …

## 1. Meeting Introduction

Today is a special day in The Salvation Army calendar. Called Founders’ Day, it’s a day to celebrate our history, and in particular the lives of our founders, William and Catherine Booth.

It’s also our Covenant Renewal Day – a day where we each have the chance to consider the various commitments we’ve made to God. For some of us, this is in the form of a covenant that we signed when we became an officer or soldier in The Salvation Army. For others, it may be a commitment you’ve made in another church, or when you were in a desperate situation and you cried out to God promising that you’d change the world if He saved you. And for some of you, you’re simply here today because you’re wondering what this Christian thing is all about.

George Whitfield conducted outdoor evangelistic campaigns in the 1700’s throughout the American colonies, in a period of revival called the “Great Awakening” in America. Although thousands responded to his Gospel message, when asked how many were converted after one of his sermons he replied, “We’ll know in five years.” The point Whitfield was making was that the passing of time should reveal which decisions were superficial and which were genuine, lasting commitments to Christ.

So let’s think of today as your five-year test. How are you getting on?

No matter your situation, we pray that you will feel very welcome and that you will encounter God during this service, as we look at our commitment to follow Him.

## 2. Sermon

### Introduction

Explanation of DTR – “Define the Relationship”.

Jesus wants to have a DTR with us.

* “It’s time we defined this relationship. Is the relationship exclusive? Is it just a casual Sunday morning thing, or has it moved beyond that?”
* “Are you following me?”

Are you a follower of Jesus?

* “Of course I am.” Obvious indicators.
* Just show part of Christian subculture. Can still be just a fan of Jesus, not a follower.

In his series “Not a Fan”, Kyle Idleman defines fans as being enthusiastic admirers – close enough to get the benefits, but not so close to require sacrifice.

There’s a simple test to know if you’re a fan or a follower – ask yourself “who’s it for”?

* About you—that’s a fan.
* All about God—that’s a follower.

The Salvation Army concept of a soldier:

* Biblical e.g. Paul
* Become a soldier by signing the Soldier’s Covenant
* Don’t have to be a soldier. But becoming one is our preferred next step in your discipleship journey.
* A soldier is first and foremost a convinced and committed follower of Jesus
* They are committed to serving God in The Salvation Army – more than membership; following Jesus is the pre-eminent passion of their life.

Introduce Bible Reading – 3000 converts at Pentecost; some went to Rome. Hadn’t had much discipleship training. So Paul writes them this letter.

* Chapters 1-10 explain the gospel message
* Where we pick up the reading, Paul is explaining what it means to be a wholehearted follower of Jesus.

### Whole Hearted Followers are growing in Four Areas

The Bible breaks the passage up into four sections, and they’re pretty easy to remember – God, Me, We and World.

Since it is Founders Day and Covenant Renewal Day, we’ll also link these four sections to the Soldier’s Covenant and some quotes from our founders.

#### 1. God

 First, God *[point up]*.

Bible Reading starts with a doxology – God is God and we are not. He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge, and He owes us nothing.

Christianity is fundamentally relational.

* A wholehearted follower has an authentic relationship with God.
*  The Soldier’s Covenant: *“I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service and the reading of the Bible.”*

Many Christians neglect to worship, pray or read their Bible, then wonder why they feel tired or experience so little of the power of God in their lives.

Story of Herbert Jackson. The power to start the car was there all the time – it only needed to be connected.

William Booth – was asked why The Salvation Army had been so successful. He said, *“If there is anything of power in The Salvation Army today, it is because God has had all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will, and all the influence of my life.”*

Being a wholehearted follower starts by being connected to God *[point up]*. [Reflection]

#### 2. Me: I am becoming more like Jesus.

 Next Bible section - ‘A living sacrifice’, and refers to ‘Me’ *[reinforce by pointing to self]*.

Paul is urging us to offer ourselves completely to God as a living sacrifice, prepared to become more and more the person Jesus wants you to be.

The problem is that many of us don’t want to change, or at least not completely. Kyle Idleman puts it this way:

*“A lot of us don’t mind Jesus once a week on Sunday. We don’t mind making some minor change in our lives but Jesus wants to turn our lives upside down – we want him to do a little touch up work, but Jesus wants complete renovation – we come thinking tune-up but Jesus is thinking overhaul.”*

William Booth believed that *“The greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender."*

As we surrender our lives to Jesus, we are transformed.

 The Soldier’s Covenant contains a range of promises about this change. For example:

* Making the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard for my life
* Upholding Christian integrity in every area of my life
* Upholding the sanctity of marriage and of family life
* Being a faithful steward of my time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind and my spirit, knowing that I am accountable to God, and
* Abstaining from anything that could enslave my body or spirit.

[Reflection]

#### 3. We: Humble service in the body of Christ.

 The next section of our Bible reading is titled ‘Humble service in the body of Christ’ and refers to us, or ‘We’ *[reinforce by a self hug]*. If we’re connected to God and are being transformed by Him, this will affect how we relate to each other in our church.

In this section, Paul is saying that Christians are in this together. He writes “in Christ, we though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

 The Soldier’s Covenant contains a number of promises about ‘we’:

* I will maintain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others; my family and neighbours, my colleagues and fellow salvationists, those to whom and for whom I am responsible, and the wider community.
* I will be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship and witness of the corps, giving as large a proportion of my income as possible to support its ministries and the worldwide work of the Army.
* I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army, loyal to its leaders, and I will show the spirit of Salvationism whether in times of popularity or persecution.

There’s at least two important points in this.

1. We’re on the same side!
   * People in our neighbourhoods are searching for authentic community.
   * Best place should be in a church
   * We should be known for our hospitality, our authenticity, and for our loyalty.
2. We’re all needed.
   * A body has many parts - all needed.
   * God has given us all different strengths and passions, not to sit and consume, but to serve and contribute.

*[This would be a good time to explain any particular ministries that you need help with].*

[Reflection]

#### 4. World: Love in action.

We’ve talked about how wholehearted followers of Jesus connect with God [point up], surrender their life to be transformed by Him [me], and serve humbly and loyally within the church [we].

 But there’s one more very important role – how we should live in the world [hands out].

* Paul defines this as “love in action”
* Living Bible translation (v9) “Don’t just pretend that you love others: really love them.”
* Caring for them both now and for their eternity.

 The Soldier’s Covenant puts it this way “I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in His name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged.” Or as William Booth would put it “go for souls and go for the worst.”

When you are connected to God and are being transformed by Him, you’ll see the world differently. You’ll see people as He sees them, and will want to genuinely care for others. But you’ll also care about their eternity and the change you’ll be experiencing in your life will make you want to share this with others.

Sharing faith not reality for many of us:

* LifeWay research - 60% of regular church attending Christians will not have shared their faith in the last six months.
* USA study, but NZ likely to be similar
* Why won’t we share our faith? Not connected to God enough? Don’t believe He has the power to change lives. We’re not being transformed so have nothing to tell others? We’re not convinced about hell. Become too comfortable?

Certainly this should not define The Salvation Army. Listen to this quote from Catherine Booth: *“A barracks is meant to be a place where real soldiers were to be fed and equipped for war, not a place to settle down in or as a comfortable snuggery in which to enjoy ourselves. I hope that if ever they, our soldiers, do settle down, God will burn their barracks over their heads!”*

### Summary

#### Ripple Effect

We’ve looked at four characteristics of a wholehearted follower of Jesus, and these should really create a ripple effect. God, to Me, to We and then our World.

1.  God *[point up]*: it all starts by being connected to God
2.  Me *[point to self]*: As we surrender to Jesus, we allow Him to transform us
3.  We *[self hug]*: As people being transformed by Jesus and sharing life together, we build an authentic community and use our gifts to serve each other, and
4.  World *[hands out]*: We genuinely love those around us and willingly tell them the good news about Jesus based on the difference He is making in our lives.

Imagine the difference this church could make filled with people who are connected to God as their power source?

Imagine the quality of our relationships both inside and outside our church if we were all being transformed by that relationship with God?

Imagine the difference our corps could make in our community if we all committed to use our gifts to serve others?

And imagine how much we would want to tell our friends about the difference Jesus is making in our lives, when he was making a difference.

That’s why Jesus wants wholehearted followers. Fans are OK, but they won’t change their world.

## 5. Response

So, let’s do that DTR.

Is your relationship with Jesus just a casual thing – perhaps a just on Sunday thing – or is it something more? Are you just after benefits, like a ticket to heaven, or like William Booth, are you prepared to declare that God shall have all there is of you?

Are you a fan of Jesus, or a wholehearted follower?

I want to give you the opportunity today to respond to God. The music team is going to play some music, and while they do, I’d like you to pause and define your relationship.

* Perhaps you’ve never before understood that Jesus wants to have a relationship with you. Following Jesus starts with a choice, and if you’d like to choose to follow Him today, please come forward and someone will pray with you.
* For others of you, Jesus might be saying “I want more”. I want to be your number one. I want you to have my power. I have plans for you – let me transform you.
* What is your contribution to the corps? Are you promoting unity and loyalty, or do you need to ask for forgiveness for not doing so? Is Jesus calling you to serve in a new way?
* The Salvation Army needs leaders, and especially people who will give their lives in service as officers. Is this something Jesus is talking to you about?
* Is Jesus challenging you to be bolder in sharing your faith?

 Today, we have some covenant renewal cards available. The cards simply say that “God shall have all there is of …” [space for your name], and include the picture of the ripple effect to remind you of the four different commitments of wholehearted followers.

If you would like to respond, we invite you to come forward, and sign the card. And if you’d like someone to pray with you, please kneel at the Mercy Seat.