

## Sermon September 6th, 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Joshua 24:15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

**Choose for Yourself Whom You Will Serve!  
As for Me and My Household, We Will Serve the Lord!**

**1) Review 2) Recommit 3) Repent**

Grace, mercy and peace have been given to you because your God is loving and gracious.

Introduction: I don't like it when people try to paint Christian men as weak-willed, soft spoken, wimpy, yes men, with no fiery determination or fierce competitive spirit to succeed! For that reason I have some favorite men of the bible, fellow Christian men with me, who blow up that soft-spoken, docile, wimpy, flowers and rainbows, weak, mindless, follower picture of Christian men. My favorite is Joshua. He was molded and shaped for 80 years by the Lord into a leader for God's people – he was born into Egyptian slavery and he died in the promised land of Israel. He led out front with or without followers. He was in your face with the truth of God's Word no matter the result. In Exodus 17, Moses ordered him to go and fight the Amalekites. We are told he carried out the command "as Moses ordered." No questions. No discussions. No excuses. In obedience and trust in the Lord, he tackled the target given to him. Most of you will remember Joshua as one of the 12 chosen spies sent into the Promised Land. 10 of the spies doubted God's promise and urged the people to go back to Egypt, just the opposite of God's clear Word of promise! Joshua stood up with Caleb against the 10 others who had the entire nation of Israel in their back pocket and told them to stop doubting God's Word and start living on His Word! Numbers 32 tells us Joshua followed the Lord wholeheartedly! O Lord give me the gifts Joshua received! Lord give all our men a faith like Joshua's - willing to go it alone with the Lord / Physical health / Bravery/ unquestioning Obedience and Single Minded Action in Service to God's Will. Actually, I pray that all of us men women and children would choose for ourselves this day to serve the Lord! Using Joshua as an example let's look at his words and review the Lord's Salvation for us. Recommit to fear and serve the Lord and repent of our double minded life.

There are certain critical times in your life when a choice must be made, a choice that has lasting consequences, ramifications-- your career, your college education, your marriage, your children's birth, your confirmation, your membership in a Christian congregation. Joshua served God's people at a critical time. For 80 years God prepared him to replace Moses and lead the nation of Israel to conquer and inhabit the Promised Land. Over the next 30 years, God kept his promise to Joshua and the nation of Israel so that at the time of our text, they were living in the Promised Land. Now at the age of 110 Joshua saw another critical time in the history of God's people. Will they continue to serve the Lord or will they choose to play both sides whichever was convenient for them at the time? To motivate and encourage the nation of Israel to choose the Lord and recommit their lives to the Lord, Joshua gave them a history review. He did that review at Shechem. Shechem is the very epicenter of the Promised Land. Shechem is the first place that Abraham stopped at in Palestine and the Lord spoke to him simply and clearly, Genesis 12:7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

At the center of the Promised Land, he started the history lesson on God's Promises. Remember the Lord's actions in Egypt – the plagues of darkness, hail, locusts etc. He did those for you. Remember the Lord's actions at the Red Sea, when you walked on dry ground and the Egyptian Chariots were swallowed up in the water? He did that for you. Remember in the desert south of the Promised Land, when the Lord acted and brought food from the sky and water out of rocks? He did that for you. Remember the Lord's actions, when your enemies attacked physically with swords and spiritually with curses and he turned the curses into blessings and the enemies ran in fear even before they saw your army? He did that for you. After hearing that review,

how could any of the Israelites say no? How could they not choose the Lord? It would be irrational, illogical and simply foolish to choose any other God, if there was one. Look at what he had done for them.

Let's look at our Salvation history. Every act for our eternal life has been completed. In order to enter into paradise, we need two things. We need to remove all our sins and we need a holy life. God has kept his promises. God's Son was born to Mary a virgin in Bethlehem as he promised. That son of Mary and God's Son obeyed all of God's commands perfectly, living a holy life. That son, named Jesus Christ, then willingly laid down that sinless life in exchange for our sinful life and became the curse for us. Proving that he died for us and for our sins, 3 days later God raised him from the dead. 40 days later he ascended into Heaven and sits at God's right hand ruling the universe for us, his people. He did all that for you, for us, for our families. How could any of us not choose to serve the Lord? We are saved.

"Choose for yourselves this day." Joshua has an edge to him, doesn't he? "As for me and my household we will serve the Lord." If you are like my family, we have that on a plaque in our house as well. I see it everyday, but after studying it closely this week, I like it all the more. What Joshua was saying to them is that his choice to serve the Lord has nothing to do with them! "I don't care which way you will go. Even if I'm the last family of believers in the Promised Land, I will not turn aside from God's Word!" He doesn't need them. That's bold, brave courageous single-minded fear of the Lord.

With the acts of salvation fresh in the people's minds he encourages them to fear the Lord and serve the Lord with all faithfulness. Psalm 130 verse 4 reminds us why we fear the Lord. It is not because we are scared of punishment, but because of his great act of love and forgiveness. Seven times Joshua uses the word for service in his explanation of what it means to choose to serve the Lord. Serving the Lord takes many different forms – worship, trust, obedience, love – but at its core it is putting God's Wants first. Joshua adds to his explanation of serving the Lord, the phrase, "with all faithfulness." It is as if he called them out. He was looking through their words, their lip service. It's easy to serve, I serve the Lord, but to truly think as a servant of God and act as a servant of God with all your heart your mind and your soul, that is the problem.

The apostle Paul calls us out like Joshua, when he talks of being double minded. I must confess before you and the Lord regularly that my sinful nature is right there. It is always trying to work the angles and edges of God's Word to see how I can indulge my sinful pleasures and sinful selfishness while at the same time giving God what he wants. We do it all the time in our relationships with each other. Maybe we call it negotiating a deal or compromising to get along. God does not compromise with sinfulness. God does not negotiate with sin. There is no such thing of having your sin and making God happy. Joshua as a good leader pointed that out to them. I don't believe that the Israelites were sitting in Shechem with wooden images of the cow God from Egypt or the Sun god or the sex gods of the Canaanites in their tents. I believe that Joshua knew they did have false gods they worshipped in their hearts and minds, just as he had to fight against them. The Israelites showed it when they went back to their homes after their recommitment to the Lord. They didn't finish the job of exterminating and pushing the Canaanites from the Promised Land. They tried to indulge their sinful wants and God at the same time. They stopped fighting against the unbelievers and tried to continue to fear and serve the Lord.

Stop being double minded. Call sin a sin. Throw it out with the garbage on Monday morning. Serve the Lord wholeheartedly. Not your love for wealth, your love for your wife, your children, sports, alcohol, or any other pleasure! Get rid of it. Serve the Lord completely, with all faithfulness, single minded determination and purpose!

That brings us to the most shocking passage, maybe in the whole Bible. "No! You are not able to serve the Lord." Joshua impressed upon them again and again, that if it was left to them to remain faithful and true to the Lord, they would all perish in hell forever. The Israelites like us, must learn to repent, confess our double minded service to the Lord and trust in his single minded grace and forgiveness. For the true sign of a Christian servant is repentance, sorrow over sin and faith in God's forgiveness. Joshua knew he relied on God's grace not his commitment, and so do all the true and good leaders of God's people today.

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. As for me and my household we will serve the Lord. Review God's Salvation for you faith. Recommit to fear and serve the Lord's Will and Repent of your double minded life.