

## “Who Do You Serve?”

Joshua 24: 1-3a, 14-25

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A significant danger we are all threatened with is that we receive too much direction from our culture. When that happens, we lose our bearings with God. The Hebrew people settled in the land and the prevailing culture was full of fertility worship. Whenever they went about life, planting and harvesting their crops, going to market, building their homes and raising their families, they were faced with the gods their neighbours expected them to honour and to worship. In order to bring the people of God back to their roots and in the direction of the one true God, Yahweh, Joshua spoke to them reminding them who they were; where they came from; how they have grown, and developed and what it means to be God's people.

**Remembering God's Grace:** Joshua encouraged the people of Israel to remember what God had done for them in the past. God had continued to provide the gifts of everyday grace for his people. God is worthy of praise and thanksgiving.

Today is Remembrance Sunday – a day of worship where we specifically look back and give thanks for those who sacrificed their lives for freedom. Remembrance Day is when we reflect on the gift of which we are the beneficiaries from those Canadians before us in our congregation, our country and around the world who willingly went to war, risked their lives, and many who lost their lives as resistance against evil.

**Gratitude:** In Joshua's words of remembrance to the Hebrew people comes gratitude for God's grace all the way back through their ancestors. Joshua reminds them of the victories God has given them in spite of their disobedience to God.

**Joy.** With thanksgiving for what God was doing and for what God has done, brought joy to the people of Israel in the present. When we come to worship, we are called to praise the Lord and give thanks. We are then ready to experience the joy of God guiding our life each day, providing for us and being reminded that God loved us so much that God became human in Jesus to live, suffer, die and rise from the dead to win the victory over all the pain, suffering, and injustice in the world.

**Choosing whom to serve.** In Joshua 24: 15, Joshua issues a challenge to the Hebrew people to make their choice of the God they would rather serve and to do it today! Joshua was very decisive about the need for the people to choose and choose now!

The people of Israel needed to make a choice. They needed to make a commitment. They could make a commitment to the idols which their ancestors worshipped, or they could serve the one true God -Yahweh who will never let them down.

**Jesus is Lord!** There is a divine way in which one lives out who they are to follow. They are to do it by serving. Nothing or no one is Lord except for Jesus. We see the powerful countries and the powerful leaders who seem to be in control, and they think they are Lord. They are not! Jesus is Lord! When we feel all is lost, and perhaps we have made big mistakes and our back is against the wall, remember this remembrance Sunday that Jesus is Lord and we are to serve him as he has sacrificed his life and served us and even our enemies with his grace!

**Being home:** Joshua says this, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua is not merely speaking about a physical structure! Rather, when we serve the Lord, the Lord's presence is evident wherever we are. We will feel more at home wherever we are because Jesus is our focus. In John 14 we read the words of Jesus to his disciples, 'I have prepared a place for you.' We enjoy our homes, our places of rest and our communities because they give us comfort. They are gifts from God to help us along the way, but our ultimate rest is in God, who will see us through our exiles, our worries, and the uncertainties in our lives like the pandemic we are all experiencing to varying degrees.

We are so tempted to serve ourselves to satisfy our own pleasures. Certainly, these things are gifts from God for us to enjoy, but not ultimately things to serve. Be aware that the message from our consumer culture is to serve ourselves, our greed and desire for consumption. When we look back on our lives and give thanks to God for these comforts, joy comes to us from Jesus who is your friend and Saviour.

Augustine, one of the great patriarchs of the church was searching for meaning, chasing after wealth, prestige and pleasure but never was satisfied. It came to him one day that he is not Lord, but Jesus is Lord. After Augustine spend so many years working hard to find satisfaction, he finally said this prayer, "I will not rest, until I rest in you. Rest in Christ! Choose Christ! Don't serve yourself, or money or stuff, serve Christ. That will be the choice that brings gratitude, joy and healing to the world and to our daily lives. Amen.