

1/4/26

Sermon Title: As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Joshua 24:1-15

¹Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

² Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods.

³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,

⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.

⁵ "Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out.

⁶ When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea.

⁷ But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

⁸ "I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.

⁹ When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.

¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

¹¹ “Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.

¹² I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.

¹³ So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

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

We offer the first Sunday worship service of the New Year 2026 to God.

As we welcome the New Year, I pray that the blessing of Immanuel—God with us—will come upon the families, workplaces, and businesses of all the members of Church of Godly Dreams.

When people welcome a new year, they usually exchange greetings such as, “A bright and hopeful New Year has begun,” or “A brilliant New Year is dawning,” dreaming of and wishing for a year that is better, more peaceful, and more prosperous than the one that has passed.

However, as you begin the year 2026 with hope, I hesitate to say this, but is it only my concern to wonder whether this year will truly be as bright and hopeful as we desire?

The entire world is caught in a vortex of war, standing on the brink where the powder keg of World War III could explode at any moment.

The Russia-Ukraine war, which many expected would end easily with President Trump's mediation, is still facing major obstacles in peace negotiations.

In the Middle East, regional powers Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are engaged in a proxy war in Yemen, where a civil war continues, each supporting opposing factions.

Just the other day (the 30th), Saudi Arabia once again carried out airstrikes against Yemeni separatist forces backed by the UAE, and the world is watching closely to see how far this conflict will escalate.

In addition, the possibility of China's invasion of Taiwan still remains.

The economy also raises many doubts if we are to accept government announcements at face value.

The United States, which has long dominated the global economy as an economic superpower, is already effectively bankrupt due to its enormous debt.

Recognizing this situation, the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are pushing for a new currency system based on the gold standard. In response, the United States is attempting to resolve its debt issues and preserve the dollar's status as the world's reserve currency by introducing cryptocurrencies into its monetary system and issuing a CBDC.

Meanwhile, the development of artificial intelligence is signaling massive transformation not only in industry but also in society as a whole.

It is predicted to bring about the greatest change since the commercialization of the internet in the 1990s.

Corporations, fearing that they may be left behind if they fail to keep up with this trend, are rushing to adopt AI and pouring enormous sums of money into it. When asked by a reporter whether companies might be investing too much in AI,

Google CEO Sundar Pichai responded that the risk of not investing in AI is greater than the risk of investing in it.

The world will soon become completely different because of AI.

AI and robots will replace many jobs currently done by people, and a day may soon come when most people no longer work and instead live on a basic income provided by the government.

Society and people themselves are no longer what they used to be.

Justice has long since disappeared.

People pursue their own interests and the interests of their own camps, regardless of what is right or wrong.

In such a situation, even without explicitly mentioning biblical eschatology, almost everyone implicitly acknowledges that the world is racing toward its end. So how should we, as believers, live through this year—and indeed the years ahead?

With what mindset and determination should we face the future?

God gives us the answer through today's passage.

The text presents a scene in which Joshua, the great leader of Israel, delivers his farewell address to the Israelites as he stands at the threshold of death.

After succeeding Moses as Israel's leader, Joshua successfully completed the great task God entrusted to him—the conquest of Canaan.

Now the time had come for him to return to the embrace of God.

Yet his heart is not at ease.

Like a parent leaving behind an immature child, he is filled with concern.

Will they continue to keep the faith and serve only the Lord after I am gone?

If they do not, they will surely face destruction—what will become of them?

The Israelites had just finished forty years of poverty and hardship in the wilderness and had finally entered the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey.

Joshua was concerned that the Israelites, who after enduring many hardships had suddenly come to live in prosperity, might fall into complacency—and even go further into hedonism and a life of self-indulgence.

He was also concerned that the Israelites would assimilate into the culture of the Canaanites and begin to worship idols.

After all, even before this, whenever given the chance, they had turned golden calves and goats into idols, following the ways of Egypt.

The land of Canaan was already inhabited by seven nations, each with its own established culture.

Their culture revolved around agricultural life and the worship of idols such as Baal, believed to control rain, wind, and storms, and Asherah, symbolizing fertility and abundance.

God had commanded Israel to completely drive out the inhabitants of Canaan precisely because of this danger, but Israel failed to do so.

Among all the Israelites gathered there, Joshua was the only one who had personally witnessed how God rescued them from 430 years of slavery in Egypt. The rest were either born in the wilderness after the Exodus or born after entering Canaan.

Given this reality, Joshua could not put his mind at ease.

So he gathered them all together and urged them to make a decisive commitment of faith.

After delivering his first farewell address to Israel's leaders at Shiloh, Joshua moved to Shechem, where he assembled all the Israelites and delivered his second farewell sermon.

¹Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

Shechem is a place of special significance for Israel.

It is the place where Abraham, the forefather of Israel, received God's promise of the land of Canaan.

It is also the place where the Israelites held a covenant ceremony shortly after entering Canaan.

Joshua gathered the descendants of Abraham at that very place.

There, he reminded them of how God had guided Israel from the time of their ancestors until the present, recounting the grace and faithfulness God had shown them throughout their history.

² Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods.

³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,

⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.

The ancestors of Israel were originally people who worshiped other gods—idols. But God brought Abraham out from the household of Terah, who worshiped foreign gods beyond the river, and granted him the blessing of sharing in His glory.

Why was that?

Was it because Abraham possessed some special ability, so that God could not accomplish His work without him?

Or was it because Abraham was morally superior or purer than others?

Not at all.

God loved Abraham and chose him without any conditions.

It was solely by God's grace.

In the same way, before we came to know God, He came to us first, even when we were children of the devil.

We have absolutely no merit to offer to God.

God says that He showed us such grace simply because He loved us.

Then Joshua goes on to recount how God delivered the ancestors of Israel from their 430 years of slavery in Egypt through the Exodus.

⁵ “Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out.

⁶ When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea.

⁷ But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

The people of Israel lived as slaves in Egypt for 430 years.

At first, while the memory of Joseph and his service as prime minister was still honored, they were treated well.

But as time passed and those who remembered Joseph died, the Israelites were reduced to slavery.

In their suffering, the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance.

God heard their groans and cries, and He sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to rescue Israel.

But Pharaoh, stubborn and hard-hearted, refused to let the Israelites go, saying, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go?”

God then brought ten plagues upon Egypt.

When the tenth plague struck—the death of every firstborn of both people and animals—Pharaoh finally relented and let the Israelites go.

Yet he soon changed his mind and sent his army in pursuit of them.

The Israelites found themselves trapped, with the Red Sea before them and the Egyptian army closing in from behind.

In their desperation, they cried out to God.

God parted the Red Sea, enabling the Israelites to cross over on dry ground.

After they had all crossed, He caused the waters to return and engulf the Egyptian chariots and soldiers who were pursuing them.

And that was not all.

God's guiding hand was also revealed in the land east of the Jordan River.

⁸ "I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.

⁹ When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.

¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

At that time, the wilderness of Moab east of the Jordan, together with the regions of Gilead and Bashan to the north, was controlled by the Amorites.

But the LORD gave them into the hands of Israel, and as a result, Israel took possession of a vast territory east of the Jordan.

When Balak king of Moab heard that the powerful kings of the Amorites had been defeated by Israel, he was seized with fear.

Instead of responding with military force, he devised another plan: he sought to use Balaam, a diviner, to pronounce a curse on Israel.

However, God caused Balaam to bless Israel instead, and in this way the LORD delivered Israel from the hand of Balak.

The LORD's guidance continued as well in the land of Canaan west of the Jordan River.

¹¹ “Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.

¹² I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.

Israel fought against the inhabitants of the land of Canaan in order to take possession of it—namely, the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

The fact that the Israelites, who had lived as slaves, come out of Egypt, and wandered in the wilderness for forty years with no preparation for war, were nevertheless able to defeat these peoples was solely because God was with them and delivered their enemies into their hands.

The LORD says that He Himself sent the hornet ahead of them, driving out the two Amorite kings before Israel.

It was not Israel who drove them out, but God Himself.

Joshua testifies that God faithfully kept every promise He had made to Israel through Moses and guided them without failing in a single word.

¹³ So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

God made the following promises to Moses and commanded that when all these things were fulfilled, the Israelites must not forget the LORD who accomplished them all.

(Deut 6:10) When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build,

(Deut 6:11) houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied,

(Deut 6:12) be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

(Deut 6:13) Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.

(Deut 6:14) not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you;

(Deut 6:15) for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.

Joshua urges the Israelites to live by serving only the LORD, who has shown them grace up to this point.

He exhorts the people to fear God and to serve Him in faithfulness and sincerity.

To call oneself a Christian only in words is of no value.

Only when our actions and the fruit of the Spirit accompany our confession can we truly be called Christians.

¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

The gods your ancestors served refer to the moon god worshiped by Abraham, the forefather of Israel, and by his father Terah in Ur of the Chaldeans beyond the Euphrates River, as well as the calf gods, male goat gods, and other deities that the Israelites came to see and follow while living as slaves in Egypt, worshiping the gods of the Egyptians.

Finally, Joshua once again urges the Israelites to make a decision of faith today, here and now, and he resolutely proclaims his own commitment as their leader.

¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond

the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Joshua, who had personally experienced the living God and His work throughout his life, knew that the LORD alone is the true God.

Therefore, without hesitation and with boldness, he proclaimed that as for himself and his household, they would serve the LORD.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

Everything has its appointed time.

We are not always given opportunities to choose and to decide.

If we miss the opportunity to decide now, it may never come again.

Now is the time for us to make a decision of faith.

The world today has come so close to the end that it would not be strange at all if Jesus Christ were to return at any moment.

This very moment may be the last opportunity God has given us to choose Him.

May Joshua’s declaration and confession of faith—“As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD”—become the declaration and confession of faith of you and me.

I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ.