

1/11/26

Sermon Title: Today, Make a Decision About Whom You Will Serve

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Joshua 24:14-31

<sup>14</sup> “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.

<sup>15</sup> 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.”

<sup>16</sup> Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!

<sup>17</sup> It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled.

<sup>18</sup> And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”

<sup>19</sup> Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.

<sup>20</sup> If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

<sup>21</sup> But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.”

<sup>22</sup> Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.”

“Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied.

<sup>23</sup> “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

<sup>24</sup> And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.”

<sup>25</sup> On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws.

<sup>26</sup> And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

<sup>27</sup> “See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to their own inheritance.

<sup>29</sup> After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

<sup>30</sup> And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

<sup>31</sup> Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel.

The farewell address of Joshua, the great leader of Israel, to the Israelites continues.

Joshua's farewell sermon is filled with deep and heartfelt love for Israel and for the people of Israel.

Standing before God's calling, Joshua must leave behind the beloved Israelites with whom he has shared life's hardships and joys, and his heart is uneasy with concern that after his departure they might be assimilated into Canaanite culture and forget the Lord.

Having guided and disciplined them in the way of faith all this time, he is filled with deep concern, wondering who will lead them on the right path after he is gone.

If they were to forget the Lord, it is clear that they would incur the wrath of the jealous God and face destruction.

Joshua carefully recounts to the Israelites how God has faithfully upheld His covenant with their ancestors and how He has lavished His grace upon Israel, upon their forefathers, and upon Israelites, urging them to serve the LORD with integrity and faithfulness.

He then strongly exhorts them to choose—today—whom they will serve.

Joshua first lists the many acts of grace the LORD had shown to Israel and to their ancestors: how God called Abraham out of the household of Terah, who neither knew nor believed in God but instead worshiped foreign moon gods, and led him into Canaan, granting him the blessing of sharing in God's glory; how God gave Abraham Isaac to make his offspring numerous, and through Isaac gave Jacob and Esau; how God humbled Pharaoh, king of Egypt, by sending ten plagues in order to bring Jacob and his descendants—who had lived as slaves in Egypt for 430 years—out of bondage; how, when the Israelites were trapped at the Red Sea with the Egyptian army pursuing them, God sent a wind to part the sea, allowing them to cross on dry ground, and then covered the sea again, drowning the pursuing Egyptian chariots; how God led them through the wilderness for forty years with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire and provided manna from heaven; and how God enabled the Israelites—who had no military training after forty years in the wilderness—to defeat the Amorites east of the Jordan and the Canaanite nations west of the Jordan.

Joshua mentions each of these events one by one, reminding them that all of this was solely by the grace of God.

Finally, Joshua earnestly exhorts the Israelites to remain faithful and to serve the LORD alone.

<sup>14</sup> “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.

He calls them to fear the LORD and to serve God with integrity and faithfulness. He tells them to throw away all the foreign gods their ancestors worshiped and the gods they followed while in Egypt.

Then he urges them to choose—today—whom they will serve. He challenges them to decide whether they will serve the LORD or other foreign gods.

And he boldly declares that as for himself and his household, they will serve the LORD.

<sup>15</sup> 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.”

Here, we need to reflect on what enabled Joshua to proclaim so boldly and without hesitation, “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

It was the trust he had built through encountering God and experiencing Him throughout his life.

He knew very well—through both the Word and personal experience—how faithful God had been to His covenant, how great the grace He had shown to Israel, to their ancestors, and to Israelites, and how faithfully He had led them in order to keep His promises.

Because of this, Joshua was able to entrust his entire life to the God who faithfully keeps His covenant.

Now it was time for the Israelites to choose.

Recalling how God had led Israel, their ancestors, and themselves, and recounting the grace He had shown them, the Israelites responded that they too would serve the LORD.

<sup>16</sup> Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!

<sup>17</sup> It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled.

<sup>18</sup> And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”

But then something unexpected happens.

Joshua suddenly tells them that they will not be able to serve the LORD.

<sup>19</sup> Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.

<sup>20</sup> If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

Joshua had a compelling reason for speaking to the Israelites as he did when they said they would serve the LORD.

He knew that although their words sounded impressive, their hearts were already filled with things other than God.

Joshua tells them that since God is holy and a jealous God, they must remove all the idols that have taken root in their hearts, including the foreign gods.

An idol is anything in our lives that we love or value more than God as we live in this world.

It can be wealth, power, or honor.

It can even be one's spouse or children.

The things of this world keep us from focusing fully on God.

The loud noise of the world prevents us from listening to the Lord's voice, and the dazzling lights of the world steal our gaze from the Lord, who is the true Light.

The Israelites once again pledge to serve the LORD in response to Joshua's words, and Joshua takes them as witnesses.

<sup>21</sup> But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

<sup>22</sup> Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

Joshua then asks for a firm confirmation once more from the Israelites, who had acknowledged that they themselves were witnesses.

<sup>23</sup> "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

<sup>24</sup> And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

When the Israelites made their commitment, Joshua led them to renew the covenant with God as a nation devoted to serving the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws.

<sup>26</sup> And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

<sup>27</sup> "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

<sup>28</sup> Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to their own inheritance.

The Israelites became God's holy people by entering into a covenant with Him at Mount Sinai through the mediation of Moses.

Then, after they entered and settled in Canaan, they once again made a covenant—this time through Joshua—to serve the LORD alone.

The terms of their covenant were written in the Book of the Law, and a large stone was taken and set up under the oak near the sanctuary of the LORD, so that the stone would stand as a witness to the covenant.

After completing all these things, Joshua, at the age of one hundred and ten, was called by God and died.

<sup>29</sup> After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

<sup>30</sup> And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah<sup>[a]</sup> in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

<sup>31</sup> Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel.

The Israelites buried Joshua at Timnath Serah, in the hill country of Ephraim, which was his inheritance.

Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel.

As a result, the LORD enabled the Israelites to defeat the thirty-one kings of Canaan, and just as He had covenanted with Moses, He gave them land for which they had not labored and cities they had not built; they ate from vineyards and olive groves they did not plant.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,  
as we live our lives, we make countless choices and decisions, and we bear responsibility for the outcomes of those choices.

Faith also demands a choice.

We must choose whom we will serve.

Will we serve God, or will we serve foreign gods and idols?

We must choose whom to serve and take responsibility for the consequences of that choice.

Every choice comes at a cost.

For Abraham, leaving his country, his relatives, and his father's household to obey God's word and go to the land God showed him required paying an enormous price.

For the Israelites living in Canaan, cutting off ties with the native peoples of the land and serving the LORD alone meant giving up many things in their daily lives. Likewise, if we are to live in this world serving God alone, we too must give up many things.

That is why many people hesitate to choose God.

They choose religious pluralism, trying to serve this and that at the same time.

But there is no Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, in religious pluralism.

We have seen how faithfully God has kept His covenant with His people.

Even when His people opposed Him, God alone remained faithful to His covenant and ultimately enabled the Israelites to take possession of the covenant land, Canaan.

Seeing God's faithfulness, we must choose, trust, and serve the God who will remain faithful to His covenant with us, no matter what cost we must pay in this world.

To become God's covenant people and to witness the fulfillment of His covenant is more valuable than any achievement this world can offer.

God is a jealous God.

If His people forget Him, He will surely bring destruction upon them.

But if they serve Him with integrity and faithfulness, He will, as He has promised, give them land for which they did not labor and cities they did not build, and they will eat from vineyards and olive groves they did not plant.

Now is the time to decide.

Choose this day whom you will serve!

May the decision of the Israelites, who confessed, "We will serve the LORD our God," become your decision as well.

Then we will become God's covenant people and inherit the covenant land—Canaan, that is, heaven.