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THE BIGGEST DECISION

Joshua 24 : 14-16

Joshua 24: 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."

PRAY

Thank you Lord for 16 years! To Him belongs all the glory! Reminder, we have a simple vision and mission for the church when by God's grace, our Lord established this 16 years ago.

VISION OF THE CHURCH

A church that obeys the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40)

36"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. '[a] 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [b] 40All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

...and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

MISSION OF THE CHURCH

"To be a disciple and to make disciples of Christ."

Disciple : Greek "matheteo" – meaning "a learning follower"

Quote : "We're called to make disciples, not simply converts" R.C. Sproul

And to be a disciple starts with a decision.

QUOTE : Albert Camus said, "Life is a sum of all your choices."

Columbia researcher Sheena Iyengar has found that the average person makes about seventy conscious decisions every day. That's 25,550 decisions a year. Over seventy years, that's 1,788,500 decisions. You put all those 1,788,500 choices together, and that's who you are.

- John Ortberg, All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?: God Has Placed before You an Open Door. What Will You Do?, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

THE BIGGEST DECISION

Most of the life-changing moments in our life begins with a decision.

- Deciding to get married -

Ice-breaker : Man asked his wife, “What’s the decision you made you most regret in your life? She just kept looking at me.”

- Deciding to migrate to another country
- Deciding to accept a job or take a course in school

As you can see on what we read earlier, Joshua is asking the people to make a big decision.
15, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve

QUICK BACKGROUND :

*Joshua 24: 14 “**Now** fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness*

We need to understand the “why” before you make a decision.

This is Joshua speaking. Remember, God has chosen Joshua after Moses died to lead the Israelites to enter the Promised Land.

God has given them success and now Joshua is very old.

Joshua 23: 1 After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man (it is this time of rest and success that usually people fall away from the Lord...remember David and Batsheba or Solomon)

That was God fulfilling His promise to Joshua when he was tasked to lead Israel to the Promised Land.

Joshua 1: 7 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

This is the reason in Chapter 24, he called an assembly.

Joshua 24: 1 Then 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.

Now what did Joshua say to them while presenting themselves before God?

He reminded the Israelites that God picked, protected and provided for them.

1. God picked them.

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.*

Significance : We have to remember that Abram was a pagan before and yet God chose Him to be the father of the Jewish people. Again, not because there was something special about him but because God chose him.

Application : Remember this, as a Christian, the reason why we were saved, the reason why we have a relationship with God, the reason why we know the truth is because God chose us.

John 15: 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you

*Ephesians 1: 4 **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight***

Illustration : It's wonderful to be chosen because the opposite of that is rejection. I remember I was already happy when we were playing street games to be "saling-pusa"

2. God protected them.

He was telling them how God divided the Red Sea and then the Egyptians were killed by covering them again with water. (v.5-7)

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.

By the way, I have read that when it comes to problems it's like the Red Sea experience for us. **God did not promise to take away the problem and the trials (the Red Sea) but He will make a way through the Red Sea.**

Application: If we are undergoing problems and trials right now, remember the same God who delivered us from those problems and trials before is the same God who will make a way for you in your problems today.

That's why Joshua had to remind them not only of the Red Sea event but how God protected them against the Amorites, how God protected them from the King of Moab by turning the curse to a blessing ...again look

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

You see what happened here. King of Moab meant to harm them by sending someone to curse them but God turned it into a blessing.

There are things in life that we do not understand now. It looks like it was meant to destroy us or curse us but God uses it for good and to bless us and people around us.

Biblical Illustration : Remember Joseph, he dreamt of a beautiful future for himself but his brothers got jealous of him, wanted to kill him, sold him to slavery and then went to Potiphar, accused wrongly and then spent years in prison and after several years, he became prime minister of Egypt. When his brothers went to Egypt because of the famine, they did not know that it was their brother who was the prime minister. When they learned that the prime minister was their brother Joseph, they became afraid but look at what Joseph said,

Genesis 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Trust in the Lord that if he allowed something to happen, he will be able to turn it into a blessing AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.

Then reminded them that God saved them again and again and again.

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

In short, Joshua is saying to the people that if we are in the centre of God’s will, He will continue to bless us again and again and again.

3. God provided for them.

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.’

Now why would Joshua remind them about this? It’s because he knows those words written by Moses in Deuteronomy 8

Deuteronomy 8 : 7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills,

11 “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, 12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,

17 Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ 18 You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 And

if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Even as people of God, in good and prosperous times, we tend to forget where all of our blessings come from.

Joshua has to remind the Israelites, just like we needed to be reminded that God picked us, protected us and provided for us. That all that we have right now is because of His favor, protection and provision.

THE DECISION

Because Joshua, just like what God is asking us to do today, to make a decision. And what is that decision...

14 "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness.

TODAY, WE ARE GOING TO DEDICATE OURSELVES TO GOD.

To dedicate ourselves to means to fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness.

Etymology : "fear" yare – to be in awe of; reverential awe.

Illustration : it's like you're in front of a tsunami, you have to respect that tsunami...if you are in front of a big tsunami, that's the only thing in your mind.

Application : This means God should be the biggest thing in our lives. This mean God should be the first in our lives. God should be occupying our thoughts. **In short, as the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."**

Etymology : "serve" abad; it is to make oneself a servant or a slave of the Lord

Characteristics of a slave : YOUR IDENTITY IS CONNECTED WITH YOUR MASTER

Application : This I love. Some people find their identity in what other people think of them. That's why when other people reject you, you're devastated. Some people find their identity in their work or in their job and that's why when they lose their job, they are devastated, thinking the job is the one that provides...their master. Some people find their identity in their family but you can disappoint your family or your family can disappoint you. Some people find their identity in their church and the same as family. But as a slave of Christ, our identity if in our good and holy Lord Jesus Christ who promised He will never leave us nor forsake us.

BUT REMEMBER WHOM WE ARE SERVING...THE LORD. And you have seen that the Lord is a good Master...why...as we have seen earlier...He protects us, blesses us again and again and again and provides for us.

Now to fear Him and to serve Him needs a decision from us.

What does that decision entail? HOW DO WE DECIDE TO FOLLOW THE LORD.

DECISION HAS THREE ELEMENTS :

- Desert
- Desire
- Determine

I. DESERT – to leave something behind

Even the Latin word where we get the word “decide” comes from two words “de – off” and caedere – cut

SO A DECISION MEANS TO CUT OFF SOMETHING

Illustration : When we are worried or anxious and you decide to trust God... you are cutting off worrying in your life. You are saying to worry, “I’m leaving you behind. I have decided to trust my Father in heaven.”

So what is Joshua asking them to leave behind, to desert, to cut off?

Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

Etymology : throw away “sur” remove, come to an end, leave

To make a decision in following the Lord means to make Him No.1 and desert the things that you were idolizing before...

Exodus 20: 3 “You shall have no other gods before me.

Definition of a god – a god is something or someone you put your trust in. Someone or something that is No.1 in our life.

This is the reason why to follow Jesus, to be a disciple of Christ means leaving your old life and making Jesus your No.1

Luke 9 : 59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” 60 And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

QUOTE : When our Lord asks you to follow Him, It’s all or nothing.

This is the reason why Baptism is very important : That’s a declaration that we are following Jesus... that’s why we sing there... “I have decided to follow Jesus... no turning back...no turning back.”

- DESIRE

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 if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you,

Etymology: undesirable “ra’a” evil, it displeases; injurious

That’s why the KJV says :

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD,

Now, you have to follow closely here.

What Joshua is saying, if you think serving the Lord, (means making Him your master as your No.1) is evil or is not pleasing to you or will injure you or will hurt you....

What?

It’s because that’s what some people think and even Christians think. Lord, if I put you first, something bad will happen to me. PERISH THIS THOUGHT! For with the Lord, if you trust Him, even the seemingly bad things are for our good because God is good. God is Holy.

Do you believe God is intrinsically good? Do you believe that He is holy? Do you believe that He is loving and merciful? Then what is preventing you to give your life to Him?

Remember David : Look at what God said about him.

Acts 13:22 ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’

And here’s what David wrote about following Jesus again Psalm 23:

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever

Tip: No extra charge.

Etymology : will follow – radap “ to chase you like a dog” to pursue you...WOW!

Another tip here : If we decide to follow the Lord... *“The Lord is my shepherd...”*

Surely goodness and love will follow us!

Now look again here? You have to remember the background again.

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.

Again : *the gods your ancestors served*

These are the gods of Abram before the real and true God called him and blessed him.

the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living.

The Amorites were tall and huge people. The Amorites trusted in themselves and in their gods and yet the Israelites defeated them because God was with the Israelites.

LISTEN CAREFULLY, what Joshua is saying, if you think by following Jesus, it will hurt you or it's evil or not good for you... **then anything your choosing aside from him is not good.**

Illustration : If I ask you to choose between “real diamond vs fake diamond”, you will surely choose the real diamond. Choosing God vs others is like asking to choose between “good and evil” What will you choose? It's like asking to choose between “blessings or curses” What will you choose?

LISTEN CAREFULLY AGAIN : TO CHOOSE TO FOLLOW AND SERVE THE LORD MEANS YOU KNOW YOU ARE CHOOSING THE BEST IN YOUR LIFE AND FOR YOUR FAMILY!

Remember, you only desire what's good and pleasurable for you. Those who choose to follow God know that God is good.

Quote : Make your decision on what you know to be the greater good for you and your family. You do not live unto yourself but with those to whom you are joined in your household. You have a responsibility to them. ~ Al Troester, Author

Which brings us to the last element.

- **DETERMINE**

But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

Now, let's break this down by God's grace.

But as for me and my household,

To serve the Lord starts with ourself first. Joshua has been established by God as the leader to take them to the promised land.

Before WE can ask others to follow the Lord, we need to make a personal decision first.

Some of the head of the families are here... we all know that following God and serving God is the best decision we can make for our families but that starts with us.

One of the things that I remember my wife saying to me is this :

“Remember B, you are the head of the family. Kung ano man ang desisyon mo, damay palagi kami.”

WHAT IS THE DECISION?

we will serve the Lord

To serve the Lord “awbad” as a slave to a master means that from now on, we are deciding that He will be No.1 in our lives. We will follow Him and we will trust Him .

Now what does Joshua mean by serving the Lord.

To serve the Lord is a determine once and for all whom you will follow.

Joshua as head of his family has decided once and for all that he will lead his household to fear and serve the Lord.

Application : Now, whether you are the head of the family or not, God is asking you right now if you will decide to lead your household in going to church, in leading prayer at home, in making sure everyone in your family to follow the Lord. They are our first ministry.

Look at what the Bible says : Deciding needs determination

1 Kings 18:21 Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.

Matthew 6 : 24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Quote : Every choice you make has an end result. – Zig Ziglar (and may I add some of them catastrophic)

GOD IS ASKING YOU TO MAKE A DECISION TODAY.

DEDICATION CEREMONY

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

S.G.D.