

Consecration Study

"As For Me and My House"

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-15

November 8th 2020

From the front pew of First Presbyterian Church
Champaign, Illinois
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This week I have been grateful to live in this imperfect but free country. Tuesday was a beautiful day to be an American in part because we did something that not everyone can. We voted.

In some countries and for some people at some polling places in our own country's history, such is not or has not always been the case. We all have much for which to be grateful. Again, I'm not saying we're perfect, but I'm glad to be part of this American experiment, part of the larger American (and world) family.

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In our text today, Joshua stood before a crowd of fellow citizens. It was "election time," so to speak. A new day was dawning for Joshua's people. The long trek to the promised land had ended. As they stood together at that new beginning on that new day, Joshua recounted their shared journey: from the land beyond the Euphrates, across the river to Canaan, to Egypt. He invoked the names of a shared lineage: Terah, Abraham, Nahor.

It was an election day, of sorts, because Joshua asked them to make a choice: Who will you serve? Will you worship the gods of your ancestors

beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, or the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob?

“Choose this day whom you will serve,” Joshua asked the people. That question is as valid for us Christians now as it was for our Hebrew ancestors in our faraway past. And it might be a particularly relevant question for us to consider in these days after this cantankerous election cycle.

Who are you going to serve? Behind whom do you throw your allegiance? As for me and my house, we will continue to follow God, no matter who holds what office.

Every day we have a choice.

- Who are we going to follow today? Who are we going to trust today? Will we trust the gods of Wall Street or the God of Mary, Martha, and the Prophets?
- Are we going to allow ourselves to be swept up in the winds of hate? Will we join in on the name-calling and the hand-wringing?
- Are we going to be mindful of those who are poor, or are we going to ignore them?
- Am I going to treat others as children of God, or will I vilify them because they don't agree with me on every important matter?
- Will you be petty or gracious, welcoming or judgmental? Hopeful or hopeless?
- Do we look at people beyond our borders as foreigner or as neighbor?

- Do we think of the time on our calendar as something to use for ourselves alone, or as something to be employed in service to others?
- Is the money in my bank only for me, for my kid's college, for my entertainments, for my retirement, for my bills, or is the money in my bank a holy trust meant to be wisely used more widely for the good of the broader community?
- Am I guided by the likes of St. Francis of Assisi who poses this question: do we seek to serve or be served? do we seek to be understood or to understand?

We face these and so many more choices. Joshua still asks that question of the faith 2,700-years later.

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Some well-meaning strangers have asked me, "When did you become a Christian?" They expect me to point to a moment in time when I once-and-for-all had my conversion. I think it's a flawed question for many reasons, mainly for this one: The decision we made yesterday or twenty years ago isn't nearly as important as the decision we make now, today. Yesterday I agreed to follow Jesus. But what about today? What about now? Do I choose to be a disciple today or not?

If I choose Jesus, I cannot choose to discount my neighbor. If I choose Jesus, I cannot choose hopelessness. If I choose Jesus, I must choose love—loving God, and loving neighbor (ALL neighbors) as I love myself.

“Choose this day whom you will serve.” When Joshua asked that question, he didn’t have Biden or Trump, or Betsy or Rodney, or any man or woman in mind. He was talking about allegiance either to the ever-changing culture, or allegiance to the God of the Cosmos.

Joshua was clear, and in his answer, we find language for our own: “As for me and my household,” he said, “we will follow the Lord.”

Amen, and Amen.

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-15 **1**Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. **2**And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. **3a**Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

14"Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. **15**Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region 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."