

Joshua's Last Sermon  
Joshua 24:1-19

For 2018's Special Early Morning Prayer, we have read the book of Joshua.

In the beginning, Joshua was the aide of Moses but he later becomes the leader of the Israelite people and servant to the Lord. That is why in chapter 1 Joshua is referred to as "Moses' aide" but in chapter 24 is referred to as "the servant of the Lord".

When you compare Joshua and his upbringing to the royal education and childhood that Moses had, Joshua was no one special. But through the word of God, Joshua did not sway to the left or the right but stayed true to the Lord.

Through God's power the Israelites saw the Red Sea part under the leadership of Moses. But they saw the Jordan River dry up completely under the leadership of Joshua. The Promise Land of Canaan may have been shown to Moses but it was under Joshua that the Israelites entered and conquered.

Today's passage is Joshua's last sermon to his people. This sermon is meant to be the foundation of the Israelite people moving forward.

From the outside, there may not have been much of a difference between the Israelites and the people of Canaan. However, Joshua made sure to explain to his people that there is a foundational core that separates the Israelites from the other nations.

**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. (Joshua 24:1)**

Joshua gathered all the leaders of Israel at Shechem. Shechem was the location where the Israelites had transformative experiences through God's power and is also where they went when they needed God's guidance.

We need this type of place and time to meet together like the Israelites did at Shechem. No one is perfect and it is important for us to go before the Lord and ask God to point out our weaknesses and make us new again.

It was at Shechem that Joshua began his sermon.

**And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. (Joshua 24:2-3)**

Abraham's father Terah had worshipped other idols. But God called Terah's son Abraham and blessed him and made him great. Therefore the Israelites had two different paths they could follow.

The first path is worshipping idols, like Abraham's father Terah. The other path is following

the word of God, like Terah's son Abraham.

This message is not only for the Israelites, but for us as well. Because we have sin, the moment we are careless we can easily begin walking in the opposite direction of God. That is why we must always be reading and listening to God's Word, it will encourage and spur us when we face temptation and hardship.

I hope that we can be a church that, like the Israelites, seek out a place and time to look carefully at our own spiritual lives and strive to be more like Christ.

Joshua, in his sermon, asks the Israelites to choose who they want to serve.

**And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”**  
**(Joshua 24:15)**

Joshua gave the Israelites an important choice, either to serve the Lord or to serve the gods of their ancestors.

Why did Joshua give the Israelites the option to choose?

It is because the Israelites experienced the grace of God. Joshua and the Israelites had experienced first-hand the power and guidance of the Lord and it is because of those experiences they could proudly and without hesitation proclaim that they would choose God over the gods of their ancestors.

We also need this type of spiritual encounter with the Lord. This is not just so our faith grows and becomes more sure, it is also so we can talk with complete authority and assurance to unbelievers when we proclaim the gospel.

But if we haven't experienced that spiritual encounter with the Lord yet, how are we supposed to share who Jesus Christ is? And if I haven't seen the fruits of what a saved life should produce, can I really encourage others who are struggling in their faith?

Paul's personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus enabled Paul to count his life as lost and proclaim the gospel with confidence. I hope that it is your desire to truly experience God in your life so that you can be a greater messenger for Him.

Although Joshua is giving a choice to the Israelites on which God they will choose to serve, he makes sure to say that only one path is correct.

This message means that you cannot serve both gods, but must choose one.

**No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24)**

God's people cannot serve two masters; therefore we must choose one or the other.

As Joshua was explaining this to his people, he adds one more thing.

**But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.” (Joshua 24:19)**

Our God is a jealous God. We must understand that God has human emotions as well.

Our spiritual lives are married to God.

The foundation of marriage is trust. If one person in the marriage is going to someone they are not married to for happiness and satisfaction, that is adultery.

In the same way, when we find our spiritual satisfaction in something other than God, we are committing adultery and God will not allow that sin to continue, for He is a jealous God.

However, even in the church there are many of you that are committing this spiritual adultery. You may be attending Sunday services well and participating in your life groups, but your heart is far from God and you are only Christian in name and not in action or belief.

We cannot love both God and the world. God wants all of us, not just a portion.

But this is not easy. We must be desperate for Him, and we must continue to work towards turning our lives spiritually to Him.

**But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)**

We must surrender ourselves to God and bow down before Him. This surrender is not shameful or humiliating, it is a blessing.

This proclamation by Joshua is not only for the Israelites or only for that time. This message is for us today.

Joshua trusted God’s word alone and held it above everything else. When God told Joshua to cross the Jordan, he crossed. When God told Joshua to walk around the walls of Jericho, Joshua obeyed. It was because of this faith that Joshua and the Israelites were able to experience the blessings of God.

Just like Joshua and the Israelites, we must trust in the word of God completely and hold it above everything else. I hope that Shining Star can be a church that proudly proclaims Joshua’s last sermon as true and who’s lives reflect that belief.

Sharing Time\_\_\_\_\_

1. Joshua gathered the leaders together to examine their spiritual lives in the land of Shechem. Has there been a time when you have looked back and closely examined your own spiritual life? Please share that experience with the group.
2. Joshua told the Israelites to choose God or the gods of their ancestors. Is there someone in your life that you need to courageously confront and give this option to? Please share.

3. Joshua said, “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” To serve the Lord is a blessing, not an obligation. Please read Joshua 24:15 together, out loud, as a group and pray as one body that this verse will be true in your life.