

Decide (Decide to Serve the Lord)" (Joshua 24)(11.17.19)

LET US PRAY.

Joshua 24 (NIV84)

24 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.

2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. 3 But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River 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 sons 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 fathers 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 desert 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 forefathers worshiped beyond the 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 forefathers served 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."

16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! 17 It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers 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. 18 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."

19 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. 20 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."

21 But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the Lord."

22 Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

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

24 And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and obey him."

25 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. 26 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.

27 "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."

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: Decide

INTRODUCTION:

We are part of a long tradition here at Emmaus Church. As I shared during the Children's Chat, on this same plot of land, the first Public House of Worship in Atlantic County was built by the Quakers in 1744. This Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in 1790, in the very early years of our nation. And in 1869, they built this very sanctuary. The roots of the Church go back through Shechem.

Joshua had led The Chosen People of God in the conquest of The Promised Land. Now, they were a nation with their own land and Joshua gathered them together and they presented themselves before God. It was time for a decision, a choice, a commitment. This choice was serious, not to be taken lightly, because it would determine their future. There would be repercussions from this choice.

This final chapter of Joshua, very much reminds me about the establishment of our nation. Something new was about to happen. It was a time to stand up and be counted. Yes, there are always consequences to our decisions. Serious choices result in serious outcomes.

From the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government,"

Six months after the Declaration of Independence was signed, Thomas Paine penned these words in opening paragraph of "The Crisis:" December 23, 1776

“THESE are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.”

There comes a time when we must take a stand. There comes a time when we must decide. We must decide what path we will follow. We must decide to what authority we will submit. Will our decision honor the God of all Creation or some other god of human construction?

BODY:

(CNN)The 16-year-old gunman who shot himself after killing two classmates and wounding three other students in Southern California has died at a hospital, authorities said.

The junior at Saugus High School in Santa Clarita died Friday afternoon, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department said.

The teen opened fire at the school Thursday — his birthday — and used his last bullet to shoot himself in the head. His motive remains a mystery.

“There’s nothing really that stands out (with the suspect). He wasn’t a loner. Wasn’t socially awkward. Was involved in student activities. Student athlete,” Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva told CNN’s New Day. “This is kind of out of the blue, shocking pretty much everyone who knew him.”

This happened yesterday: Richard Tobin is an 18-year-old white man who was sitting in his car in the parking lot of Menlo Park Mall in Edison, New Jersey. He had a machete in his hand and planned to kill African-Americans because there were so many around him, which “enraged” him. Thankfully, he did not do it and is now in custody.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reports, Tobin, who lives in Brooklawn, New Jersey is accused of “the vandalism of two Midwestern synagogues earlier this year, making him the latest target of a law enforcement crackdown against alleged white nationalists in South Jersey.”

Friday November 15th 2019 PLEASANTVILLE (one witness said that there were at least a dozen police officers there)

At least two people were hurt when shots were fired in Pleasantville during a high school football playoff game on Friday night between Pleasantville High School and Camden High School, authorities said.

A young boy and an adult male were wounded in the 8:30 p.m. shooting, Atlantic County Prosecutor Damon Tyner said at an 11 p.m. press conference.

We are living in tumultuous times. In our government; in our culture; in our churches; we seem to be adrift. We cannot be passive and stand idly by.

This scripture strongly compels us to decide.

(consider showing Logos NIV highlights again)

>Spurgeon coined the word for a special people: betweenites!

>We assume that because we distance ourselves from today's culture by 20 years of correction, that we are living God-honoring lives. The truth of the matter is that the culture is not the benchmark. The Lord Jesus Christ is the benchmark. Just because we are not as corrupted as most in this current generation does not mean we are any closer to God. We need to be completely honest with ourselves. Who are we serving?

The person in relationship with this God must, in every moment of life, choose whether to be faithful to God or to some competing reality.

>No Cheap Grace; it won't be easy; In fact, we know that without God the Holy Spirit it is impossible.

>Welcome to WW: Illustration of woman who joins but never loses weight.

>Emmaus website & FB

>BOD Historical Statement: "Membership in the church was serious business. There was no place for those whom Wesley called the "almost Christians."

22 Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

27 "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."

The Absecon UMC choir director shared this story with the Senior Choir this past Wednesday. The Cherub Choir is for 4-8 year olds. They went into the sanctuary and up onto the altar area to practice their song. One of the little boys saw the baptismal fount and said, "Hey, my little sister got washed in that."

Next Sunday, the 24th, is the Sunday before Thanksgiving. As a congregation we will be reaffirming our faith collectively and individually using the Baptismal Covenant IV in our hymnal.

CONCLUSION:

Tomorrow night, the Emmaus Church Council will vote on whether we should join the Wesleyan Covenant Association. This decision, if affirmed, would unite us with other congregations that share our orthodox and traditional understanding of the Bible. Everyone is welcome to attend and join the discussion. Only the Council Members get to vote; but don't feel bad, the pastor won't be voting either.

We are thankful for our faith tradition. We are thankful for our freedom tradition that our nation provides. This week, I ask you to do a serious self-evaluation of your relationship with the Lord Jesus. Decide. Choose; Choose God; Choose God Now; Choose to Serve God Now.

14 "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the 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 forefathers served 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.”

Amen and amen. Let us pray.