

9/13/2015

Lord's Day Service Message

Making Right Choices

Joshua 24:14-24

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."

Billy Graham said, “The strongest principle of life and blessings lies in our choices. Our life is the sum result of all the choices we make, both consciously and unconsciously. If we can control the process of choosing, we can take control of all aspects of our life.”

We have choices to make each day. Life is full of choices –and consequences. You and I are who we are today, because of the choices we have made until yesterday. The choices we make will determine our character, our influence, and ultimately our destiny.

After serving God and the people of Israel in his entire life, just before his death, Joshua reminded the people of their history of how God called and delivered them, and he challenged them to make the right choice: “*choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve*” (verse 15).

In today’s text Joshua teaches us how to make the right choices.

Make choices with uncompromising commitment

To make right choices, we must make choices to serve only the one true God. Because when we make choices to serve the Lord first of all, God will take care of everything else in our lives for the best of consequences Joshua said to the Israelites to do so: “*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*” (verse 14).

There could be no mixing of allegiance to God with other gods. They had to choose to serve none, nothing and no gods but God.

There are some people today who are trying to keep one foot in the world and another foot in God's kingdom. They don't want to make a commitment that might change their status in the world. And they don't want to give up their sin in order to really be right with God. So they end up remaining in middle ground, not really a part of the world and not really a part of God.

Joshua challenges us to acknowledge that it is time to make a decision. What Joshua means by the choice is that we must make a choice to serve God not halfheartedly but with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our strength. The summary of the Ten commandments is this: *love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind* (Matthew 22:37). Jesus never gives us the middle ground, a ground of compromise in our choices- either we have to choose God or money, either the kingdom of God or kingdom of this world. Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money”* (Matthew 6:24). The Holy Spirit rebukes believers in the church of Laodicea who are standing on middle ground, not making a clear choice to serve the Lord (Revelation 3:14-19).

If we make choices with uncompromising commitment- making choices to love and to serve God first of all, God will always bless us for our choices.

God blessed Ruth when she chose to follow her mother-in-law Naomi. Ruth made that choice not just for her mother-in-law but to follow the God of Naomi with all her heart: *“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God”* (Ruth 1:16). The choice she made that day led her to become the wife of Boaz, and belong to direct ancestor of king David and eventually of the king of kings- Jesus Christ.

Choose today whether to enter the world and live by its standards, or make a decision to follow God wholeheartedly and without reservation.

Have you made a clear choice? Whom are you going to serve? Are you going to serve the gods of this world or are you going to serve the King

of Kings and Lord of Lords! Are you going to serve the gods of materialism or are you going to serve the Almighty Creator of the Universe.

Before you make a choice, ask yourself this question: “Am I making this choice because I love God or I love something else? In your marriage, in your job, in your business, in your school, when you make any choice, ask that question first and make choices with the answer, “yes, I am making this choice because I love God, because I want to serve God.” If you make those kind of choices you will always make right choices which you will never regret.

Make choices by counting consequences

Joshua encouraged his people to think about the consequences of a choice before they made it: .." *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*"(verses 19-20).

We have to live with the consequences caused by our choices. The choice you make today, will surely effect your future life. Some of the choices may be trivial and the consequences are not that serious. But there are choices that are very important, and the consequences may affect your entire life either positively or negatively. - making a choice to get married to a certain person, making a choice to buy a house with a 30 year loan, making a choice to have a new baby, etc.

So, before you make choices always think about the consequences of the choices. When you think about consequences, you also need faith in God's promises for you. Because if you think about consequences of choice without faith in God's promise, it may be very hard for you to make important decisions.

There was a man who got lost in the desert. After wandering around for a long time his throat became very dry, about that time he saw a little

shack in the distance.

He made his way over to the shack and found a water pump with a small jug of water and a note.

The note read: “pour all the water into the top of the pump to prime it, if you do this you will get all the water you need.” Now the man had a choice to make, if he trusted the note and poured the water in and it worked he would have all the water he needed. If it didn’t work he would still be thirsty and he might die. Or he could choose to drink the water in the jug and get immediate satisfaction, but it might not be enough and he still might die. After thinking about it the man decided to risk it. He poured the entire jug into the pump and began to work the handle, at first nothing happened and he got a little scared but he kept going and water started coming out. So much water came out he drank all he wanted, took a shower, and filled all the containers he could find. Because he was willing to give up momentary satisfaction, he got all the water he needed.

You must seriously count the consequences of your choices. Never make an important choice lightly based on your feelings and limited understanding. In the Scriptures God has given you clear instructions of how you must make choices of every matters in your life. Take enough time to study and meditate on the promises of God which are related to the consequences of your choices. If you are not sure, keep praying to seek wisdom of God who can convict you of the consequences.

Then make a choice when you are convinced that God will take care of the consequence.

Make choices to follow the will of God

If you make your choices to follow the will of God, even if it means great sacrifice, God will always bless you. To make choices to follow God’s will, you must surrender your will to God’s will. That is what Joshua was telling to his people: “*throw away the foreign gods that are*

among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel” (verse 23).

Jesus has set the example of how we all have to make choices to follow God’s will. Just before he was crucified on the cross, he faced choices to be made- either following his will which was not to go through the sufferings of the cross or following God’s will and go through sufferings and death on the cross. Jesus really struggled and agonized to surrender his will to God’s will. But through earnest prayer he surrendered his will to God’s will and made the choice to suffer and die on the cross. Jesus says all believers: *“if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24). That is the key statement of the Lord. It will help us make right choices always. To make right choices, make choices with the cross in mind always.

There are moments of struggling when we try to make the choice to take up the cross. Nobody makes the choice to take up the cross easily and lightly. But when you make a choice to take up the cross, the Holy Spirit empowers you and enables you to overcome the pain of the cross and brings you to the glory and power of the resurrection.

The very first person to reach the status of billionaire was John D. Rockefeller. At the age of 23, he had become a millionaire, by the age of 50 a billionaire. Every decision, attitude, and relationship was tailored to create his personal power and wealth. But three years later at the age of 53 he became ill.

His entire body became racked with pain and he lost all the hair on his head. In complete agony, the world’s only billionaire could buy anything he wanted, but he could only digest milk and crackers. His personal, highly skilled physicians predicted he would die within a year.

As he approached death he realized that he would not be able to take any of his successes with him into the next world and he was not in in

control of his own life. He was left with a choice.

He called his attorneys, accountants, and managers and announced that he wanted to channel his assets to hospitals, research, and mission work. On that day John D. Rockefeller established his foundation. This new direction eventually led to the discovery of penicillin, cures for current strains of malaria, tuberculosis and diphtheria. The list of discoveries resulting from his choice is enormous.

But perhaps the most amazing part of Rockefeller's story is that the moment he began to give back a portion of all that he had earned, his body's chemistry was altered so significantly that he got better. It looked as if he would die at 53 but he lived to be 98.

Ask yourself before you make any important choice- "Am I making this choice because I follow the way of the cross or I follow my own way?"