

Sunday Oct. 11, 2020  
 Lesson 6: Choose Today  
 Scripture: Joshua 24: 14-28

**Context:**

Following the Old Testament lesson in the book of Exodus, we move on to the book of Joshua. We transition from looking at the leadership of Moses and move to Joshua, the one who served alongside Moses and now leads the Israelite people. Joshua continues to seek out those who will continue to grow spiritually so the Israelite people may come into the Promised Land.

Going through the book of Joshua, there is a theme woven throughout the narrative. The exclusive worship of Yahweh is a prerequisite for Israel's continued possession of and prosperity in the Promised Land.<sup>1</sup> The worship of other gods will result in divine retribution, a curse explained in Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight.<sup>2</sup> Joshua is called upon by God to lead the people and to remind them of the prerequisites for being God's chosen people.

The authorship of the book of Joshua has at times been attributed to Joshua. However, the verses at the end of the book describe his death, indicating another source played a role. Today scholars tie the authorship of the book to Deuteronomistic Historians, those who wrote the history of the Israelite people when the culture was changing from an oral one to a literary one.<sup>3</sup> The stories of Joshua and the challenges and successes would have been passed down from generation to generation until able to be collected in written form.

The passage presented today connects the story of the Israelite people weaving in where celebrations like the Passover derive their origin. Joshua has come to a point in the midst of rebellions and people serving other gods to remind them of their history. God was the one who brought them out of Egypt and the one who gave them the land where they currently live.

The people have amnesia though. They have begun to worship other gods and have blended in with the people around them. A conscious choice has been made to forget what God has done for them. The parallel between Moses and Joshua is clear as Joshua reminds them of all that God did for them in bringing them out of Egypt.<sup>4</sup> Once again, Joshua like Moses goes back and forth with the people about covenant and then proceeds with a covenant ceremony and creates an altar to commemorate the occasion.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael D. Coogan, ed. *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 195.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 200.

### **Application**

The text this morning is a powerful one for the Israelites and for the church today as well. The echoes of the Exodus story loom large and tell a story to be retold over and over again. God's story reminds us of the power of choice and mutual accountability in our spiritual growth.

Once the Israelites got into the Promised Land, things became grey. The people saw they had plenty and they ate it up. They were free from bondage and oppression. They were able to claim the land as their own and glean from the harvest. Life was good.

Yet other things began to happen as well. People began to worship other gods, gods of the Amorites and those beyond the Euphrates. People had forgotten the very God who brought them out of Egypt and gave them this land. Joshua knew the people needed to get it together or they would fall on their own swords.

Today is not as different as much as we would like to believe. Many of us have lives where we have most of our needs met, and most of our wants as well. Yet at times we choose to worship other gods because for some reason, it's not as "fun" to give back or glorify God.

The gods of leisure, prestige, and popularity are all very powerful. They promise us that if we give to them, they will give us everything we need. Who cares about others when you can do whatever you want and that's ok even if it means not being committed or dedicated? With leisure, it is all about enjoying life so much there is never true rest or Sabbath. Keeping up appearances is of the most importance no matter what the cost may be. Prestige gives authority and respectability. And everyone knows your child needs to fit in so you can fit in and everyone can look at you. Being popular looks and sounds like so much fun.

American Christians in particular struggle with the gods of the land we live in. I am sure they exist in other countries as well. I can only testify to what I and others see going on in our communities and churches. There are other gods being worshipped and it is not just people outside the church who are worshipping them. At times, we also slip into worshipping these gods because we have forgotten our roots.

As this passage from Joshua reminds us, we have one God. Our God does not care if we are prestigious or popular. Our God cares more about us following God and being reminded of the blessings we have been given. God is zealous for us. God wants us to step up to the plate and remember how God is the one who ultimately gives us life.

We have been given incredible freedom with our God. Just as Joshua suggests, we do have a choice. We can choose to follow Jesus and give of ourselves, seeking the way to grow as a disciple. Or we can choose those other gods and chase after them, always promising to eventually get back to God. The choice is given to us and we face it in every season and decision we make.

The hope is we will choose God because God has chosen us. God has time and time again delivered us even when we have failed. God is calling for us to wake up from our sleep and see all the opportunities we are given when we choose to follow God. Today we are given the choice; whom will you serve today?

What do you think Joshua wanted to achieve in his speech? Why is it important for us to remember God's history with us and to remember all the times God has delivered us? Why do you think discipleship is such a challenge today? How do the gods

of the world interfere and cause us to stumble in our walk with Christ? How can we choose to be disciples of Jesus? Why do you think God never gives up on us?

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