



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Joshua 24:1-15

Winter 2021

"Serve The LORD"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and it's good to have you back and it's good to be with all of you and have you back. We're coming to the end of our studies in the Book of Joshua and we're in chapter 24, which is the last chapter. I'm not going to do the whole chapter, I'll finish it next week, but we're going to look at verses 1 through 15. So I'll read those verses.

Before I do, though, I want to comment on the hymn we just sang. Elizabeth tries to coordinate the hymns with the text and she does an excellent job of doing that. And this hymn reminded me of the very things I'm about to read to you in—this third stanza, "In His hands He gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes." Well that, certainly, is the message of Joshua to the nation in this final address that he gives to them. And while he doesn't say He bears them along or carries them along, that's certainly what He did. And I'll even bring that out in the lesson. But He certainly conquered all their foes. And that's what Joshua will remind them of, their complete dependence on the LORD. And so let me read it, and you'll see this, I think, as I do. But certainly it will bring it out in the lesson itself. Joshua 24, beginning with verse 1,

<sup>1</sup> Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2</sup> Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD,

the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely*, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. <sup>3</sup> Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. <sup>4</sup> To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mt. Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. <sup>5</sup> Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out. <sup>6</sup> I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. <sup>7</sup> But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. <sup>8</sup> Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you. <sup>9</sup> Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. <sup>10</sup> But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand. <sup>11</sup> You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, *and* the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand. <sup>12</sup> Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, *but* not by your sword or your bow. <sup>13</sup> I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

<sup>14</sup> "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua 24: 1-15

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of studying it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, again, what a privilege it is to be with Your people in this place, and doing this; reading the Scriptures, considering the meaning of the text, which we will do in a few moments, and singing praises to You. You're certainly worthy of all of our praise. In fact, we cannot give You enough praise. We don't have enough time in the day to do that. We don't have enough days in the week or years to do that. We'll spend all eternity doing that, and only increase in doing that with the intensity of our worship, the clarity of our worship, and the greatness of it—it will only increase as we increase in our knowledge of You.

Well Father, I pray for that for all of us in this hour—a knowledge of You, a deep understanding of who You are. Because as we do that, we will put away the gods that we carry in our heart and we will look only at You. And I pray that through our time together, that You would do that, You would sanctify us and You would put out of our hearts all the things that clutter our minds—the things of this world which are not important and some of which are very harmful. LORD may we come to know You better and may you make us more like Your Son, the LORD Jesus Christ. Bless us spiritually. Bless us not only in this hour, but in the one to come when we remember our LORD and His death for us in the LORD's Supper. Bless that, and may this be a time of sanctification for us.

We pray, LORD, also for our material needs. We pray that You would bless our health. We're still in this pandemic. Some of our members are not feeling well, some of them are sick. I pray that You'd give them healing, pray that you'd protect those that are vulnerable.

Father, bless us now as we sing our next hymn, and then bless us with open hearts to receive the ministry that is given from Your Word. Be glorified in all of it, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Joshua 24 is a good passage for a New Year's sermon. The New Year is the time for reflection, self-examination, and resolutions, (that are usually broken and forgotten within weeks). But this chapter is not for one day of the year—but every day. In this last chapter of the book, Joshua gives the people of Israel a final charge to choose whom they will serve, God or idols. And it was the choice that the prophet Elijah gave to the nation Israel on Mt. Carmel, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him, but if Baal, follow him." (1 Kings 18:21).

Really, that's the question that we all must answer for ourselves. Who or what are we going to serve? God or things? Joshua's answer was clear, "...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (vs15). That's the charge and lesson of this passage.

But before he gave the charge to choose, he made a case for choosing the LORD in verses 2 through 13, by reviewing Israel's history from the calling of Abraham to the conquest of Canaan. His reason was to produce gratitude in order to produce a response. So he did two things: He demonstrated that the LORD is the only God by recalling His overthrow of the heathen nations and their gods. And he recalled the LORD's goodness to them—to Israel—to show His loving care and to show His faithfulness to His promises. Everything that the nation had was a gift of God's sovereign grace. The point is plain enough—God is real—the idols are false. God's unconditional love for Israel should move His people to respond to Him out of love and to serve Him only.

So Joshua assembled the nation at Shechem to give this last sermon. Shechem is in the middle of the land. It's a convenient location for all of the tribes to meet. It's set between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. After the nation defeated and burned the city of Ai it went to Shechem. —Half of the tribes stood on Mt. Ebal; half of the tribes stood on Mt. Gerizim. On Mt. Gerizim they read the blessings of the Law. On Mt. Ebal they read the curses of the Law. It reminded them that if they were obedient they would be

blessed, blessed greatly, blessed above all of the nations. But if they were disobedient, they'd be cursed.

Now Joshua called them all back to the same place to give a sermon that would remind them of their obligations as God's people—and the danger of unfaithfulness. When all the tribes had gathered there, with the elders, the officers, and the judges, Joshua spoke to them—but not in his own words. He began, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel..." God speaks through Joshua. Then, directed by the LORD, he began recalling Israel's past, its history and origin, back to Abraham and his father Terah.

People take pride in their ancestry, at least they want to; now that's only human. So today, a lot of people are researching their family tree in the hopes of finding someone of importance or distinction on it. Maybe an ancestor who came over on the Mayflower, or maybe there was a president in there, or some war hero. And no one has a more noble ancestry than the Jews. They're related to the patriarchs. Their father is Abraham. What could be better than that? That's where Joshua begins.

But he didn't go there to boast. —Just the opposite, really, to give the people a dose of reality and show they have nothing to boast about. Their ancestry is dark, full of idols, "From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods." (vs2).

It's biblical to reflect on our past. In fact, Isaiah would later write, "Look to... the pit from which you are digged." (Is 51:1). Remember Abraham. Remember Sarah. And Joshua did that here. Abraham was a great man. He is the example of faith. He is called the father of believers and "the friend of God". That's high praise. But he was that only by the grace of God. And that is the reason that Joshua goes back to that dark, unflattering past, to remind the nation what he was—and what the LORD did.

And from Abraham's call out of Ur, east of the Euphrates river, it's obvious that from the beginning God had done it all. The history and life of the nation was the result of grace. Abraham was an idol worshiper in a heathen land. He was an unbelieving, undeserving man. —Yet the LORD did not leave him there. For some reason unexplained, at least unexplained here, He called him out. Verse 3, "Then I took your father Abraham

from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac." It's clear that God was the initiator. "I took your father Abraham..."

Later, Jewish interpretation is, that when God called Abraham, He did it only after first calling all of the nations. And when none of them answered, Abraham responded. And so God chose him. That is so like human nature, to spin things in its own advantage. The opposite is true. The central fact in all of this review of Israel's history, is God's work. —'I took', 'I led', 'I multiplied', 'I gave'. It's all of God. There is no place in this passage for human pride.

One of our elders, Jim Frazier, will periodically remind us of something Dr. Johnson said late in his life. It was that if you remember nothing else of what he taught, "Remember your inability." There's nothing more humbling than that; and nothing more basic and true. We are sinners without exception. We don't like to hear that because it means that we're not only guilty, we're incapable. We're not only guilty, we're helpless—we're unable.

One of the greatest debates in the history of the church was over this issue. It happened when Augustine wrote a prayer in his spiritual autobiography, *The Confessions*. The prayer is, "All my hope is found solely in Your exceeding great mercy. Give what you command and command what You will." Meaning, 'LORD, You are sovereign and I'm not. I'm helpless. I cannot do what You command unless You give to me what You command. Then command whatever you will, and I will obey.' In other words, 'LORD, I can't do anything good apart from Your mercy. Give me mercy.'

There was a British monk who came to Rome and had an influential ministry there. His name was Pelagius. Now we had a Sunday School lesson a few weeks ago on much of this very thing that I'm saying here. It's an excellent lesson. I'm reminding you of that. Pelagius was a man of self-discipline, a man of piety. In fact, Augustine had respect for him because of the morality that he urged upon the church. But when Pelagius read that line in *The Confessions*, he became furious, 'Of course we can do good. Of course we can do what God commands. If He commands us, we can do it. He wouldn't

command us if we didn't have the ability. We have the ability to obey.' In fact, Pelagius said "We can even become perfect." He was what Bunyan would call Mr. Legality and Mr. Morality. We earn God's approval by our deeds.

Well, it set off a debate that continues down to this day between these two kinds of people, those two people and people like them who believe in either 'total inability' or believe in 'human ability'. Sovereign grace vs. human merit.

This has always divided men. It divided two men in the temple that Jesus spoke of in Luke chapter 18, the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee prided himself on his deeds. He looked up to heaven and he said, 'I fast and I pray and I pay tithes. Thank you I'm not like that tax collector.' And the tax collector couldn't even look up to heaven. He looked down and he beat his chest saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" Now that's the difference between humble Augustine and prideful Pelagius.

That's church history and we might ask, 'Where do the Scriptures side on this issue?' There are many texts that I could read to you, but Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 5 says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...But God...made us alive together with Christ Jesus." 'You were dead'—'but God'—He is the difference. He did that for Augustine. He did that for the tax collector. He did it for Abraham when he was lost in Ur worshiping idols. He shined His light into his dark heart and He made him alive—gave him a call—commanded him and gave him the ability to respond in faith. Remember your inability—and God's great grace to make us able. He made Abraham and Sarah able. They came out of idolatry and He led them out of Ur and into Canaan.

Then the LORD blessed them with descendants. When Abraham was too old to beget a child, 99 years old, and Sarah was unable to conceive, God gave them Isaac, a miracle of God's sovereign grace.

Again, Joshua recalled this for Israel so that they would think on what they should think upon—and that is God's grace—and they would be moved by that to gratitude—devotion, and to worship Him. That's what grace should do. It should move us to selfless service to Him—to adoration of Him.

This emphasis on sovereign grace continues in verse 4, "To Isaac", the miracle child. God gave twins when Rebecca, his wife, was unable to conceive, 'Jacob and Esau'—not 'Esau and Jacob'. The order is important, you know, because Jacob was the younger brother. He was the second born. And yet here he's listed first, showing the fulfillment of God's choice of him over Esau, the first born, the rightful, or at least the expected heir.

Paul develops this in Romans 9, verse 11, that while the two were still in the womb, before either had "done anything good or bad." There's nothing in them to influence God's choice, in other words. They'd done nothing good or bad—that's when God chose the one over the other.

So again, there's the reminder of the nation's origin in God's undeserved love—in God's sovereign grace. Jacob, through whom Israel traces its descent, was no better than his brother Esau. Both came from the same womb at the same time. Yet the younger was chosen over the older. That's sovereign grace—distinguishing grace. Not heritage or merit or deeds—just the opposite.

Now, God was good to Esau—didn't neglect him—in fact, He gave Esau just what Esau wanted. He gave him Mt. Seir to possess, which is Edom. But Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt, Joshua says.

Now, where's the grace in that? The LORD gave Esau a place. He gave him a nation. He gave him a people. But He gave nothing to His chosen people, at least not immediately. Instead He led them into a foreign land, down to Egypt. It was a place of affliction. Moses called Egypt "the iron furnace", (Deu 4:20), a place where Israel was enslaved, and without any appearance of being the elect people. But it was in Egypt that they grew into a nation. And through affliction they were given the desire to leave that land and to go to Canaan.

Affliction is not a sign of rejection or disfavor. It is an evidence of God's choice of us. It's an evidence of sonship. Often God puts His elect into the iron furnace, not for evil, but for good. Even there in Egypt, in some lonely place where He made places, He is with us, He is refining us, He is preparing us through all of that to come out of this world

and into the promised land—into the heavenly land. Teaching us that this world is not our home, and we're not to invest in this place and live for this place. He did that for Israel.

And at the right time the LORD says, in verse 5, "I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out." Verse 6, "I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time."

That's all a summary of the miracles of the exodus—really, the first 40 years from the exodus to coming into Canaan. But enough is said here to remind them of God's almighty power and His great mercy; "And you lived in that desert for a long time" (vs7). And it was to bring to reflection how God provided for them every day, every morning, every evening. All 24 hours, He took care of them.

And what a testimony this is. Israel, (in contrast to Egypt), a nation of slaves overcame an empire and its army. That can only be explained as supernatural. They were slaves, but God gave them freedom.

And so it is for every believer in Jesus Christ. We're not where we are because of any wise and godly heritage. (That may have an influence. In fact, there's no greater blessing for a child than to be born into a Christian home and come under the wisdom and influence of Christian parents. That very, very often has a great, glorious outcome. It's a great blessing.) But, it's not spiritual credit put to our account. We don't live on the faith of our parents or our grandparents. We entered the world, every one of us, guilty, without merit, enslaved to sin, until God set us free with the blessings Christ obtained on the cross that were applied to us by the Spirit of God—and we believed. And then we were free indeed.

John Newton, the former slave trader, reminded himself of that every day—reminded himself of the grace of God that snatched him from that horrible profession

and made him a child of God and made him a great preacher of the gospel—and hymn writer. And he did that by putting the text of Deuteronomy 15:15 in large letters over his mantel in his London home, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee." Well, He did that for all of us if we're believers in Jesus Christ.

And having redeemed Israel and set them free, He then gave them victory after victory. And in verses 8 through 10, Joshua reviews their conquest of the kings east of the Jordan River. The first to fall were the Amorites; Sihon and Og, referred to in verse 8 where God says, "I brought you into the land...and I gave them into your hand." Again, emphasis is on what the LORD did. He brought, He destroyed. So Israel occupied.

When the Moabites tried to fight Israel with magic and hired the false prophet Balaam to curse the nation, God turned his curses into blessings. Well that's not only an example of God's greatness, the greatness of His power, but of His goodness—the goodness of His purpose toward them, the goodness of His purpose toward us. He will use the enemies attacks on us for our good. He turns a curse into a blessing.

The greatest example of that is the cross. It was Satan's attack on Christ, it was Satan's attack on us, on the elect—but it became the LORD's triumph over the devil. It's where He defeated him and sin, and won our salvation. God turned the enemy's curse into our blessing, Christ's wounds into our healing.

And Joshua reminds Israel of that blessing of God on them. God gave victory over the enemy, east of the Jordan and west of the Jordan. Verse 11, "You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, *and* the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand."

Well that's a summary of the first 12 chapters of the Book of Joshua. But again, the emphasis is on the LORD's victory, "I gave them into your hand." And, as he said in verse 12, it's not Israel's skill with 'the sword and bow'. The land that these armies of Israel gained was a gift of God to them. And to impress that on the people, God describes Canaan according to the promises that He made in Deuteronomy, chapter 6,

verses 10 through 11. And Joshua summarizes that in verse 13, "I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you lived in them; you are eating of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant." God promised that before they entered the land—and He delivered. That was His gift to the people who originated in idolatry, beyond the River and His gift was both generous and undeserved.

So now Joshua arrives at the principle point of his address; that if these things are so and the people had witnessed all of them, then these things call for a response of faith and obedience—a call for a response of not simply obedience outwardly, but inward obedience. It called for a response of devotion. Verse 14, "Now therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

What an amazing statement, "Put away the gods." They were carrying idols! Now this was the faithful generation. They weren't like their fathers who had worshiped the golden calf and wanted to go back to Egypt. This is the generation of Israelites that was faithful. They had witnessed all of the amazing things that Joshua recalled here. They had experienced God's provision and protection all their lives. Every day God had sustained them in the wilderness with manna from heaven. They called it 'the bread of angels'. Angel food. He gave them water to drink in the desert. They witnessed His power. They experienced His faithfulness every day. And all along they were carrying idols—false gods. They had a divided heart.

So now Joshua says, 'Enough of that. Throw away the idols and serve the LORD.' But then he adds in verse 15, 'If that is disagreeable to you, if serving the LORD is not appealing, if you like the false gods, then you must choose whom you will serve.' Now listen, the question is not, 'Will we or won't we serve?' It never is. We all serve. The question is, 'What will we serve?' We either serve the LORD or we serve a false god. We either serve the LORD, or an idol, or our lust, or our appetites—but we all serve.

Joshua was experienced enough as a preacher to know he couldn't make them do the right thing. All he could do was give them the Word of God. All he could do was remind them of the truth, and point them in the right direction—they had to choose. So he told them to do that. Make your choice, the gods of Abraham, the gods that he left behind at the River; the gods they were carrying through Canaan—or the true God who was carrying them. Choose today, he said.

And that really gives the lie to the objection against Augustine's prayer—the kind of objection we often hear against 'the inability of man'; against the doctrines of predestination and election—the objection which is, 'Well that makes us robots—can't be. Can't be true, because otherwise we'd just be automatons.'

That's nonsense. No one believes that. That's what you call a straw man, a false representation of the truth. Everyone uses their mind. They process truth, they make decisions, and those decisions are real decisions, genuine decisions. People reflect upon something and then they make their decisions and they act upon that.

The problem is, no one can make the right decision apart from the sovereign grace of God because sin has so affected man's mind and man's will that it is, in effect, bent toward evil, not good. And man can't straighten it out. And so he naturally understands and acts upon that bent mind and will—and chooses wrongly all the time. As a result of that condition our mind is darkened. We're described as blind. —We can't see. —We can't understand.

Nevertheless, we are responsible to believe. And there is power in God's Word. It penetrates the darkened heart. It gives light and ability. It's supernatural. And that light breaks upon the heart of individuals and they see the truth. Joshua gave truth. He gave light. He told them to respond, and people do.

And this is how they do respond. They hear the Word of God, they hear the truth of God, and it has an effect, because it's a supernatural Word. And that simply means that the Word of God, the Bible, is attended by the Spirit of God. He's always at work in it. That's the miracle. —People respond. —Light comes in to darkness.

That's the invisible power and work of the LORD in the heart of man. And it is what the LORD said Himself, in Matthew 19, verse 26, after telling the disciples that "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (vs24). They were astonished, these disciples. The rich were those whom heaven had smiled on—the people with all of the advantages and the privileges one could have. And so they said, "Who then can be saved?" If the rich can't get into heaven, what about us poor souls—us lowly fishermen and tax collectors? And Jesus answered, "With people, this is impossible..." There's the inability of man. He could not have put it any more forcefully—more even than Augustine did in his prayer. "Impossible with man." "But," He added, "with God all things are possible." And there's the hope, and there's the certainty that we have. God is gracious, and abundantly gracious, so much so that He seeks those who do not seek Him. —As He did with Abraham, the idolater. Found him in darkness, saved him, and brought him out.

So Joshua, knowing the grace of God and power of His Word, appealed to the nation's conscience, and said to the people, "...choose for yourselves today whom you will serve." But, whatever they chose, the God who carried them, or the gods that they carried, he says he'd already made his choice. "...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (vs15). And, of course, after all that he had said in this sermon about God's unconditional love and grace, His power, His provision, and protection, that was the obvious choice. That was the right choice. That's the only choice.

But this is the choice that is always before us. It's the choice that we face this morning, and the later today, and every day. Whether it's New Year's, or every day, we face this choice, 'Who will we serve, the LORD or the idols?' And you wonder, how is it possible that the Israelites, this faithful generation, had idols? But it was. They did. And it's possible for us today. I'm talking about believers to have these idols. John ended his first epistle with the warning, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." Paul, I think it's very similar to what he said in Romans, chapter 12, verse 2, "Do not be conformed to this world." It pulls on us.

There are idols in this world. The 21st century has all kinds of idols that attract us. They are whatever takes the place of the LORD God in our heart—whatever captures our hearts, whatever captures our affection and interest and controls our time and behavior. It's different things for different people—things that may not be bad in and of themselves. —In fact may be good in and of themselves, but they have displaced the LORD as our primary object of affection, as the one who has our thoughts, our time, our activity. So we need self-examination, to choose who or what we will serve today.

And yet, the only way to put away the gods of this world from our hearts, is to see the beauty and the reality of the LORD God, the true God. I've spoken before of Thomas Chalmers, the 19th century Scot and theologian who wrote a little book. It was actually a lecture or sermon that he delivered titled, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection." And really the title says it all. The expulsive power is love. It's our love for the LORD. When we see the LORD's glory, His beauty, and we recognize His power, and realize that He has given us everything that we possess, from temporal life to eternal life—when we begin to see this, then, we love Him. We will love Him and serve Him because He loved us and blessed us. He called us out of darkness. He called us out of deception and death, every bit as much as He called Abraham and Sarah out of idolatry. That's the unconditional, unsought love of God.

That's John 3:16. "For God so loved the world." He loved a fallen world of rebels who had rejected Him, but He didn't reject us. He sent His Son to die for us, and redeem us, save us, plucked us like 'brands from the burning'. And He will keep us, never leave us, and bring us safely into the promised land. —That's grace!

And as we think on it, and think on it often, (and we will do that if we are diligent students of God's Word, and we read it and continually live in it, and see the greatness and the glory of God), then it will produce within us gratitude, and a desire to know Him more and serve Him more faithfully—and worship Him and honor Him. That's the only way we will come to that mature understanding of Him and right behavior—through the Word of God.

Well, if there's someone here who has taken the time to come to this place this morning but has not believed in Jesus Christ for salvation, then the charge of Joshua is for you, too. Just as he told Israel, 'choose for yourself today whom you will serve', make a decision today. You need to do that. You need to make that decision now. You may not have tomorrow. You may not have the rest of this day. You don't know. James tells us we're 'just a vapor'. We may be gone in a moment. So choose today whom you will serve. —Trust in Christ, the Son of God, and the only Savior of mankind. He died for sinners in the place of all who trust in Him. So look to Him. Believe and be saved.

That's what He invites the sinner to do, and it's all that we can do. Believe in Him. Rest in Him. And then, you will be able to do like Joshua—serve the LORD.

Let's bow in a word of prayer, and then we will seek the LORD's blessing on us as we take the LORD's Supper. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your goodness to us. We thank You for this great text of Scripture, this great challenge that Joshua gave to the nation; and it's for us, as well. We are so tempted by the things we see around us, and we invite that stuff into our hearts. We do so sometimes unwittingly and before we know it we're caught up in things that that distract us from You—maybe good things, but nevertheless, not the best things.

So LORD, we pray that You would arrest us and bring us into greater conformity to You, and give us a greater love for You. May we have a desire to read Your Word; and as we read it, would You, through the Spirit of God, enlighten us and give us a great understanding and great love for You. You have blessed us beyond anything we can ever comprehend. So help us to begin comprehending it and thank You for Christ.

Thank you for this time now. Bless it as we remember Him, and His death for us. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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