

We Will Serve the Lord
Joshua 24:1-33

IMP: There is a place on your bulletin notes to write down a few examples of God's goodness to you. I'm going to ask you to do that during the sermon so begin now to think about God's goodness to you so that when we come to that point in the sermon, you will be ready to write down examples of God's goodness to you. Then, in CGs, you'll share what you've written.

Just before he died, Joshua gathered Israel at Shechem, the ancient home of Abraham and Jacob. Shechem is where God promised Abraham the Promised Land (Gen 12:6-7). It is also the place where the nation renewed their covenant with God on Mount Ebal (Joshua 8) soon after entering Canaan. Like in ch 23, Joshua is going to make a two-fold application of his message.

- a) Do this and live
- b) Do this and die

But first...

First: Here is what God has done. 2-13

Redemption is God's initiative –

- a) 2 - Your fathers...served other Gods
- b) 3 - Then I took your father Abraham...and led him...
- c) 3b – I gave him Isaac
- d) 4a – To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau
- e) 5b – I brought you out (of Egypt)
- f) 6a – Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt
- g) 7 – He put darkness between you and the Egyptians
- h) 8 – I brought you to the land of the Amorites...and I gave them into your hand
- i) 10 – I made Balaam bless you
- j) 10ba – I delivered you out of his hand
- k) 11 – I gave (nations) into your hand
- l) 12 – I sent a hornet before you, which drove them out
- m) 13 – I gave you a land...

It is important to know that redemption is God's idea and accomplished by God. This gives us security.

Philippians 1:6 - ...he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion...

Joshua's speech is just like Moses' speech when he delivered the Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-3 - And God spoke all these words, saying, ²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” ³“You shall have no other gods before me.

- a) This is what I have done
- b) This is what you must do

(**CG leaders**, look for Suzerain treaty info after the CG questions)

IMP: Have you been thinking about your list? Write down now, some of the things God has done for you. Each memory is like a photo in a memory book. You'll discuss these in CGs.

Long before the worlds began, according to Eph 1, God had already planned to do what he later did in Christ. The Fall did not take him by surprise. And this is good news. Why?

Romans 5:10 - For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

Second: Here is what we should do. 14-24

a) Joshua's Call. 14-15

This is Joshua's famous statement, "*Choose you this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

This is another decision day for Israel.

Twenty-five years ago, in ch. 8 of Joshua, they stood on Nebal with the Gentiles who had fled Egypt with them and Rahab, her family and the Canaanite tribe of Gibeon who had claimed Israel's God as their own and Israel, reaffirmed their commitment to God.

Twenty-five years later and just before he dies, Joshua calls them to a recommitment.

CGs – Why is it important to recall God's goodness to us?
Why is it important to recommit ourselves to God?

Israel knows their forefathers worshipped false gods, first in Ur but also in Canaan. They will also be tempted to worship false gods.

b) Israel's Commitment. 16-18

- Israel acknowledges God's goodness. 17
- Israel recommits themselves to God. 18

c) Joshua's Warning. 19-23

- "You are not able to serve the Lord..."

At some point in every wedding ceremony I read **1 Cor 13:4-8a – "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."**

There is

- Bad news – you can't do this
- Good news – God does this through you (and this is why we need to be Christians)

But why can't Israel serve the Lord? Because God is holy. But what why is that a reason Israel can't serve God? Because God's holiness demands perfection and in the short 25 years that Israel has been in Canaan, they have demonstrated they cannot perfectly obey God...nor will they be able to do so in the future.

Paul discusses this predicament and divine solution –

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 & 16 - *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies....So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.*

We do not despair in our fallenness or our sin because these things demonstrate “the surpassing power of God [that] belongs to God and not to us

The great news...the greatest news of the gospel is the sufficiency of God and our insufficiency. God has completely saved us and His Spirit sanctifies us.

Israel’s greatest problem was getting out of God’s way to win Canaan and that is often our greatest difficulty.

What do you give the God who has everything?

You’re A Good & Gracious King

One aspect of the beauty of Christ is his completeness; a completeness that completely covers our incompleteness.

Does my brokenness overwhelm me? Yes and no. Yes. My sinfulness is overwhelming but not despairing? Why not? Because Jesus has granted me his perfection.

2 Corinthians 4:7 - *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed....*

2 Corinthians 12:9 - *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*

Galatians 2:20-21 - *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*

There were two OT covenants:

- a) The Abrahamic covenant (given first) meaning God will give Israel the land forever
- b) The Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai meaning Israel can be temporarily removed from the land if they are disobedient

Israel’s disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant doesn’t annul the Abrahamic Covenant. In the same way, our disobedience to God as Christians doesn’t undo what Jesus did on the cross.

Nonetheless, the people are not deterred by Joshua’s warning and say in vs 21, *“No, but we will serve the LORD.”*

What’s the problem with that? There is no *deo volente*, “God willing” or “With God’s help” or “Just as God won Canaan for us, he will win us to himself.” It is all flesh, all self. And you and I both know what that looks like.

s 21-28 – And so Joshua confirms the covenant and wrote it in “the Book of the Law of God” which made the book of Joshua part of the book of Moses.

Can I tell you that every Sunday when we gather we are involved in a covenant renewal service? We hear in song and word what God has done and then respond by living accordingly.

PICTURE of TREATY STONE – Then, as was common in the OT, he took a large stone and set it up with what he had said and what the people had said.

Conclusion:

Stones often ‘told the story’ of the king’s demands and the people’s responses. They were used in trials or as proof of guilt. But if there was no stone.....

Can I show you a stone that says that God has the final word? Actually, I can’t show you the stone. It’s been rolled away.

Picture of me exiting tomb!

And that says everything.

Community Groups:

1. In verses 2-13, review the text and talk about all the things that God accomplished on behalf of Israel.
2. What do you think is the most memorable event and why?
3. Which is your favorite memory and why?
4. Pastor asked us to make a list of the good things God has done for us. What’s on your list?
5. CG leader – take some time to discuss a Suzerain Treaty.
6. Look at Joshua 24 and see how it serves as a Suzerain Treaty.
7. How does, knowing God initiated redemption and planned it, even before the foundation of the world, bring comfort to us now? Consider reading Ro 5:10.
8. Of what benefit is it to recall God’s goodness to us?
9. Why is it important to weekly recommit ourselves to God?
10. What was ‘wrong’ with Israel’s pronouncement of a commitment to God?
11. Read 2 Cor 4:7-10 & 16. Why do we not despair in our fallenness?
12. According to Galatians 2:20, what is the secret to living the Christian life?
13. How do we nullify God’s grace?
14. Read Genesis 12:1-3. What is the difference between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant? The first is unconditional and set on only what God will do - I will...I will...(5 times) without any condition upon Abraham’s response. But Abraham does respond because the promises of God are too good to refuse.

Suzerain Treaties

In the Ancient Near East, treaties between kings was common. These were treaties drawn up among equals and mostly outlined agreements to honor each other's boundaries, to maintain trade relations, and return run-away slaves. Also preserved in these collections are treaties

drafted between a superior and his inferior. If the relationship was familial or friendly, the parties are referred to as "father" and "son." If the relationship is bereft of kindness and intimacy, the parties are referred to as "lord" and "servant," or "king" and "vassal," or "greater king" and "lesser king." The greater king is the suzerain and the lesser king is a prince, or a lesser lord in the service of the greater king. The lesser lord is a representative of all the common people who are under the protection of the greater king. He enforces the treaty among the masses.

These Suzerain/Vassal treaties open with two sections: 1) The identification of the Suzerain by his name and titles; 2) The historical survey of the Suzerain's dealings with the vassal. The purpose is to illustrate to the vassal how much the Suzerain has done to protect and establish the vassal who therefore owes submission and allegiance to the Suzerain. These two sections are referred to as the "Preamble."

The next section of these treaties list the "stipulations." What the vassal is required to do is spelled out in principal and detail. This section is often concluded with the requirement that the vassal deposit his copy of the treaty in his temple, where he is to occasionally read and study it to refresh his memory concerning his duties.

The last section of these treaties contains the blessings and curses of the Suzerain. If the stipulations are met by the vassal, he will receive the Suzerain's blessings, which are listed. If the vassal fails to meet the stipulations, he will receive the Suzerain's curses, which are also listed.

The Suzerain would keep one copy of the treaty and the vassal would keep one copy of the treaty. A number of ratifying ceremonies were used depending upon the era and culture. But the most widely used rite was that of cutting the bodies of animals in halves and placing them in two rows with enough space between for the two parties of the treaty to walk side by side. As they walked between the pieces, they were vowing to each other, "May what has happened to these animals, happen to me if I break this covenant with you.

Covenant Documents of the Bible Patterned After Suzerain Treaties:

Exodus 20

- (1-2) "*Yahweh*" is the Suzerain who delivered this Preamble to Moses, the vassal-lord who represents the people under the authority of the Suzerain.
- names & titles = "I am the Lord, your God."
- historical prologue = "Who brought you out of Egypt..."
- (3-17) Stipulations with selected blessings and curses.
- stipulations = the 10 commandments;
- blessings and curses = (5b-6); (7b); (12b).

