



Serve the Lord!

Joshua 24:14-15

Sermon given remotely on May 17, 2020

from Lancaster home due to the COVID-19 quarantine!



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Serve the Lord!

Joshua 24:14-15

Opening Comments

- Hey this is Rick Lancaster – coming to you remotely from my home office – thank you for tuning in
- As Captain Obvious would say, “Nothing is as it was, nor is anything the way it should be!”
- Until early January, every time you turned on the news you were seeing something about the 2020 election
- Now everything is about COVID-19 and the effects the government’s actions are having upon people’s lives and the economy
- This is not going to be a political message, though I am aware that some of you would like it to be
- There are some who suggest that the church has no place in politics – I disagree!
- So did the founding fathers of this nation
- The church is the moral conscience of the nation
- And if the church is silent you end up with what Paul warned us about in **1 Timothy 4:1-2**

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...

- Turn to **Ephesians 2**
- Because the church has been too quiet for too long, we have a political system that is mostly spiritually dead
- And in case you are wondering what is wrong with that, a spiritually dead system cannot produce spiritual life, it can only produce more death
- Paul talks about the reality of that on an individual basis
- **Ephesians 2:1-3**
- If you are a Christian, you were spiritually dead, incapable of knowing or responding to God or spiritual things
- You were living in this spiritually dead world and producing spiritually dead things

- **Ephesians 2:4-10**

- The only reason anyone in this world, including you and me, are capable of good works is because Jesus saved us from spiritual death and made us alive by His sacrifice
- Here we are today, two months into a government-mandated quarantine with no definitive end-date in sight
- So, what do we do – what should you do?
- Simply – Serve the Lord! It is not as easy to do as it is to say, but that is what we ought to be doing – Serve the Lord!
- After I pray, we are going to look at a couple of verses from the book of Joshua
- The very last part of that will probably be familiar to most of you but it is a needful reminder
- We will wrap it up by looking at what it means to us individually as well as what it means to the church
- The church that Jesus died to create needs to wake up, listen for His voice, and then choose
- Let's pray and ask the Spirit to give us ears to hear what He is saying to the church
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Serve the Lord!**
- Turn in your Bible to **Joshua 24**
- As you are making your way there, I will give you a little background
- These are Joshua's last words to the people of the nation of Israel
- He has faithfully led them into the Land God promised them
- In the first 13 verses Joshua calls all the leaders together and rehearses their history briefly
- And then he says to them
- **Joshua 24:14a**
- 'Now therefore...' – Because of all that God has done for you, do the following
- **Joshua 24:14**
- Joshua calls them to three responses

- These are the right responses for someone who acknowledges all that God has done for them
- In the next verse we are going to see that we have a choice
- God is not going to make us respond this way
- But if this is the way God wants us to respond it is because it the response that is best for Him and for us
- The first response: **Choose to Fear God**
- The Bible says this ought to be default position of all of God's people

Deuteronomy 6:24

And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* this day.

- Notice in that verse, 'for our good always'
- This is not about being afraid – though, if you are not one of God's children through faith in Christ – you should be terrified!
- We use the phrase 'reverential awe' to describe how a believer should fear God
- Maybe you don't know this, but God is amazing
- The better I get to know my heavenly Father the more I am awed by Him
- His love, grace, holiness, patience, and mercy toward me are endless
- His tender care of me, and comfort, and compassion overwhelm my senses
- And then to think of His creative power, His sovereign control, and perfect judgment staggers my mind
- A proper fear of the Lord sets Him far above any earthly personality
- We don't think of Him like we do of US President Trump, or California Governor Newsome, or Murrieta Mayor Wunderlich
- And heaven forbid we don't treat God like the checker at the grocery store or the clerk at the take-out restaurant
- God is far above the heavens, not just in location, but in all conceivable ways
- Get to know God through His Word and let that knowledge fill you with wonder and awe
- The second response: **Choose to Serve Him!**
- For everything God has done for you, it is reasonable for you to do something for Him

- Joshua is not trying to guilt them into serving God, or command them to serve God – Next verse = choice
- He is saying it is the right response for someone who knows and remembers what God has done for them in the past and has promised to do for them in the future
- Serving God is also the right response for someone who has a proper fear of God
- I serve my wife, Kelly, because I love her and because she loves me
- But on her best day, her love for me doesn't come close to how much God loves me **1 John 4:10**

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- Pastor Randy has been a good friend to me for many years, and he and Debbie have given of themselves in ways that I will never be able to repay
- But what they have sacrificed on my behalf isn't even worthy of comparison with what God gave – His only begotten Son, Jesus
- Joshua is telling his people – serve God because of what He has done and will do, and because of who He is
- Paul says in **Romans 12:1** that it is reasonable for us to serve God **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**
- Not all Christians are called to serve God by preaching, teaching, or evangelizing, but all Christians are called to serve God in some way
- Personally, I made a choice to serve God more than 20 years ago
- Now, I can't imagine living any other way
- Even if I wasn't able to or was prevented from doing what I am doing today, I would still find a way to serve God
- In the last 20 years I have grown in my knowledge and understanding of what God has done, what He will do, and who He is – I must serve Him! It has been engraved on my heart, mind, and soul – I will serve
- Joshua then encourages them to deal with anything that interferes with serving God
- Third response: **Choose God Alone!**
- As modern Americans, the idea of false gods is not as clear as it would have been to Joshua's listeners

- In that time in history gods were imagined for every conceivable aspect of life
- If you wanted lots of children or for your animals to reproduce, you worshipped the god of fertility
- If you wanted to be successful, you worshipped the god of riches or money
- If you wanted the farm to do well, you worshipped the god of the ground
- If you wanted rain, you worshipped the god of weather
- And that is not limited to ancient times
- For example, Hindus have either 33 gods, or 33 categories of gods, or 33 million gods
- A ‘god’ is anything someone turns to for something only God can provide
- More than ever people are turning to drugs and alcohol to ‘escape’ something, their feelings, pain, depression
- Or they are turning to inappropriate relationships for happiness or security
- Joshua is telling his people to get rid of those things they are turning to rather than God
- To serve God, we must serve only Him – Jesus said in **Matthew 6:24** **No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**
- Jesus is saying the same thing as Joshua – choose
- As I have learned to do that in my life, I have discovered that God is so much better than those other things
- He is always faithful and provides so much better than those other things, which makes me want to serve Him more
- **Joshua 24:15a**
- ‘if it seems evil to you’ – NASB ‘If it is disagreeable in your sight’
- Joshua is saying, ‘If you don’t want to serve God, don’t!’
- Just understand, if you choose anything other than God, when those things fail to give you what you think they will, which they will, and you come crying to God, He will remind you of your choice, and tell you to go to your false gods and cry vainly to them

- God will respect your choice and honor it by not interfering
- Joshua then makes it personal
- **Joshua 24:15b**
- Joshua is the God-appointed leader of the nation of Israel
- But here he acknowledges a personal responsibility to God for his choices and actions – ‘As for me’
- This was a very personal thing for Joshua
- Everyone around him might make a different choice, but his choice was clear – he would serve the Lord
- He also acknowledged his responsibility as the spiritual leader of his family – to lead them in service to God
- As I said earlier, I have made the commitment to serve God with my life
- I have done my best to lead my family to choose to serve the Lord
- For me, serving God has focused on pastoring, leading, and teaching the flock of God at Calvary Chapel French Valley for the last sixteen years
- I love this church and the people God has called into it
- Two months ago, when quarantine began, I was thankful for the technology that allows us to do remote services like this one
- In faith and obedience, we complied with the government’s restrictions
- But at no point have I had any peace about it
- And so, recently I asked the Board of Directors of the church to pray about it
- In the meantime, we have sought counsel and sought wisdom from God’s Word
- This week, we got together on a video conference call to discuss and pray about this matter
- We were united in the belief that it is God’s will that we reopen the church
- We want to be good citizens and for the last two months we have lived under the exhortation in Romans 13 to “be subject to the governing authorities”

- But the governing authorities are saying without exaggeration that worship of God as He has commanded it is unimportant/not essential
- And now we find ourselves in the place where we must say with Peter **Acts 5:29**

But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

- You have heard me say it on many occasions - “be subject to the governing authorities” until the governing authorities tell you to do something contrary to the Word or will of God – we are there now
- So, on May 31, 2020, on Pentecost Sunday, we will celebrate the birth of the church by reopening the church
- We will be subject to the governing authorities in all things as it relates to the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 except in the prohibition against gathering
- Probably better than most of the other places people are gathering now
- Not all churches agree with this decision, you might not either, that is okay – you pray – seek God for His will for you and for your family
- You choose to serve the Lord as He directs you
- That is what we believe we are doing
- **Pray!**
- If you have questions about this decision, email them to info@calvaryfv.com and we will do our best to answer them
- God bless you – have a safe and radical week with Jesus