

“Choose This Day”

Joshua 24:14-15

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All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted

Fear is the logical response to the recognition of great power. Imagine swimming in the ocean and seeing a great white shark. You would probably encounter a fear that is both appropriate and proportional to the power in front of you. How much more so, compared to God, should we fear? Remember that “fear” in the Bible is also often used to refer to a deep, deep reverence that is steeped in awe and wonder. Experiencing God leaves you awestruck.

The Fear of the Lord is a logical response to your recognition of God’s awesome power and surpassing greatness that demands an all-in or all-out choice. Through the mouth of Joshua, as recorded in 24:14-15, God calls the Israelites – and through His Word, He calls us – in reverence and fear to choose Him; to love, honor, obey, and serve Him.

God’s Word gives us a great perspective on service. 1 Samuel 12:24 shows that service is a response; Romans 12:1 informs us that service is a form of worship; Malachi 3:18 teaches us that service is the evidence of righteousness; Galatians 5:13 assures us that service is an act of love. Joshua calls the Israelites, and now us, to choose whether or not we will serve the Lord, and gives three specific generalities on what that looks like.

The first is to choose to serve the Lord sincerely (v.14). Sincerity means not pretending – it means acting like who you truly are, and behaving in a manner consistent with what you believe; it means not saying one thing and being or believing another, and that sounds a lot like integrity, doesn’t it? *Integrity – and thus sincerity – means giving your best. Think of the times when you’ve been tempted to give less than your best. Maybe when you have nothing to gain or lose; perhaps when others aren’t giving their best, or maybe when an outcome is already decided. Those situations might make it hard to really give your very best.*

We are blessed to be part of the kingdom of heaven; blessed to have the help and support of a loving church family; blessed to have this day, which the Lord has made, to rejoice and be glad in; blessed to know Jesus as Lord, and Savior, and friend. We’ve got it so good! But *sometimes the ease of blessing is the enemy of service. That ease can lure you into a mindset of not giving your best, regardless of the situation. But we are called to serve with sincerity, and that means always giving our best to the Master. In the Old Testament, sincerity means being perfect, complete, or without blemish. Check out Genesis 6:9, Exodus 12:5, and Joshua 10:13.*

Verse 14 then calls us to serve the Lord “...in faithfulness...” That means never taking a day off, even when it’s hard or when it costs a lot or when it hasn’t paid off. Consider the statements often heard in marriage vows – “For better or worse, in sickness and in health.” That means choosing that person even when you don’t want to; a picture of faithfulness.

Will you choose Jesus even when you don’t want to? Sometimes it is very difficult or costly to choose Jesus; it is often hard work, and maybe it is tempting to wonder if it’s worth it. But Jesus is faithful, and He who is faithful calls you to be faithful to Him in return.

This faithfulness has connotations of stability. KJV translates this word as 'truth.' It denotes the stability of standing up to the test of strain as well as the test of time and the reliability of showing up for work day after day, year in and year out. It means being forever His, faithfully. After all, you want a car that starts up every time, right? That's reliability. And you want a bridge that will not crumble underneath you, right? That's stability. And you want a friend whose word never needs to be questioned, right? That's truth. Indeed, God is calling you to serve in that way – reliably, stably, and truthfully. Or in a word . . . faithfully.

Choosing Jesus means serving the Lord exclusively. Verse 14 declares, 'Put away the gods of your fathers and serve the Lord.' Put away the gods of your selfishness, your happiness, your benefit, and your popularity. Put away the gods of this world and serve Jesus only. Does not Matthew 6:24 declare that you cannot serve two masters? Indeed, it is either all-in or all-out. Stop saying – and stop believing – that you're a Christian on Sunday morning, when it is anything less than evident on Tuesday morning... or Thursday night... or Sunday afternoon. Serve God, and only Him, every day. Every. Day. Each week has 168 hours. You can't be a Christ follower for 1 of them and a you-follower for the other 167. It's all-in for Him, or all-out for you. Choose this day, to serve Him exclusively.

You serve other gods when you take the world's opinion over the Word's truth. The "god" of pursuing your happiness above all else is humanism; a philosophy that always puts you on the throne. That's not where you belong. Isaiah 6 reminds us that God is on the throne, not you. Put away all the things that compete with your wholehearted, whole-life devotion to God above all else. Again, think of the marriage vows, which often say, "Forsaking all others...cling *only* to him/her" – That's exclusivity!

In the statement 'Serve the Lord,' "The Lord" is the direct object, which is the recipient of the action in any sentence. Surely, *God is the proper and only appropriate recipient of your service* (and worship and devotion). There may be *room* for more than one to sit on the throne in heaven, but there is no *reason* for more than one. Jesus doesn't want an open relationship with you; He wants exclusive access to your heart.

You've seen enough – you have the information – so choose. Who will you serve? Head of the household – spiritual leader in your home – You are responsible for your family. Speak up! Explain to your kids why this is important! Explain why the choice to follow God is the most fundamental, most important decision you will ever make!

Husbands – it's time to man up. Stop being a passive wimp, hoping your wife or your kids will choose to serve the Lord. Eternity is on the line here – being passive is no longer an option!

Joshua 24 is the last scene in Joshua's life and he knows he's not going to be there to hold their hands anymore, so it's time for them to decide for themselves whether they will serve the Lord. You won't always have a Joshua around to guide you, so sooner or later you have to choose for yourself. That day is today. Choose Jesus!

But what about those of you who have been following the Lord for decades? How does this passage hit home with you? Remember that this gathering that we see in Joshua 24 is the end of his life, and he is seeking to leave a legacy. How about you? What legacy are you leaving? Finish well. Invest yourself into the next spiritual generation, and you will leave a legacy that will last.

Raise the bar of expectation for yourself and for those in your household – your children, grandchildren, etc.

This is a call back to the Lord, and it is a generational decision, not a daily decision. If you come back to this decision again and again, you've decided to follow other gods. DECIDE! Once and for all! Make your decision. Etch the line in stone, and pick your side.

God says, through Joshua to the Israelites who would choose their own way instead of choosing Him, 'Fine; give your way a try. How has that worked out for you so far?' God isn't afraid of challenges from other gods any more than a megalodon would be afraid of a goldfish.

God loves you, but He is tired of riding shotgun. He's not your copilot, and you're not His! He says, 'You say that you love me but there you sit, on your backside. Get back there and push.' Advancing the kingdom of heaven is hard work. Are you up to the task? Choose this day whom you will serve.

Takeaways from this message.

The fear of the Lord is the logical response to the recognition of great power, and is a deep, deep reverence that is steeped in awe and wonder. The fear of the Lord prompts you to service.

Choose to serve the Lord SINCERELY.

- **INTEGRITY means giving your best.**
- **Sometimes the EASE of blessing is the ENEMY of service.**

Choose to serve the Lord FAITHFULLY.

- **Faithfulness has connotations of STABILITY.**

Choose to serve the Lord EXCLUSIVELY.

- **You serve other gods when you take the WORLD'S opinion over the WORD'S truth.**
- **God is the proper only appropriate RECIPIENT of your service.**

The call to choose the Lord is a GENERATIONAL decision, not a DAILY decision.

DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.

- 1. What does the Bible say about fearing the Lord (Prov. 1:7, 8:13, 19:23, Deut. 10:12)? How can you fear the Lord if perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18)?**
- 2. Explain how fear of the Lord prompts you to serve Him.**
- 3. What do you get when you cross a shark with a snowman?**

4. **Why is it important that the decision to choose Jesus is fully thought out, rather than an emotional response?**
5. **Joshua did two things in Joshua 24:26. What is the significance of these?**
6. **Explain how the choice to follow and serve the Lord is both a “one-time” and also a “daily” decision.**
7. **What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?**