

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 4 November 2012
Services: 7.30am and 9.30am
Series: *One off*
Passage: Joshua 24:14-24
Title: As for me and my household...

- It's all or **nothing**.
 - You want to represent Australia at the **Olympics**, it's **all** or **nothing**.
 - You want to play for Australia in the **Rugby**, in **cricket**; it's **all** or **nothing**.
 - You want to be an **astronaut**, **prime minister**, **CEO of Microsoft**... it's **all** or **nothing**.
 - That's the **nature** of that sort of **commitment**.
 - You can let nothing **distract** you.
 - It requires **training**, **sacrifice**, **focus** and **dedication**. ///
 - And if you want if you want to follow **Jesus**... it's **all** or **nothing**.
 - There can be no **compromise**. No playing around at the **edges**.
 - It's not like a **gym** membership – where you fit it in when you **can**.
 - it's not like **religion**, where you have these religious **compartments** to your life which you open up and step into every once and a while but the rest of your life is – well – **normal**.
 - It's more like a **marriage**. **All** or **nothing**.
 - **Commitment. Sacrifice. Focus. Exclusivity.** ///
 - Today – a one off sermon – not part of an ongoing series – due to the Triathlon – but it's exciting to step back in time and look at the fledgling nation of Israel just arrived in the land God had promised **centuries** before...
 - So the date is around 1500BC and you'll recall that after God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, they wandered in the desert for 40 years
 - Now they have entered the promised land, driving out the inhabitants... and the land has been **carved up** and **allocated** to the various tribes of Israel...
 - ...and now in **Joshua 24** – their **leader** – **Joshua** – who led them into the land and in battle against the **residents** of the land – is about to **die**.
 - The verses read to us were part of his **valedictory speech**...
1. **[And now, fear the Lord and serve him... v14-15]**
- ..And they are a conversation between Joshua and his people...
 - '**Fear the Lord** and **serve him**', says Joshua
 - '**We will**', Israel responds.
 - 'You **can't**', says Joshua – 'it's too **hard!**'
 - 'We **WILL**', they respond with gritty determination
 - 'Ok' says Joshua – 'then **throw away other gods**'
 - 'We **will**' they say – 'we **will**'.

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- Up to **this** point in the chapter, Joshua has been retelling the story of God's **dealing** with the Israelites right back from Genesis **12**, when he called Abraham to serve and follow him.
- And it's a story of **grace**.
- Of God's great **goodness** to his people and his loving **patience** with them... Joshua is telling them what **God** says to them...
- So... in v3 – I took **Abraham** and gave him many descendants...
- Vv6-7 – I brought your fathers out of **Egypt**... and through the red sea...
- V8 I brought you to the land of the **Amorites**... I gave them into your hands...
- V11 you came to **Jericho** and I gave the people into your hands...
- V13 – I gave you a land on which you did not **toil** and cities you did not **build**...
- **Blessing after blessing**...
- God has been **very good** to these people... despite their **complaints** against him, their failure to **trust** him, their failure to **inquire** of him, their failure to **obey** him...
- He has **blessed them... abundantly**...
- And now – having brought them to **THIS** point – **now** – they are to **respond**... by an **exclusive commitment** to the Lord **alone**... throwing away **all other gods** – which of course are **NO gods** – and serving **him alone**.
- Notice this is completely **upside down to religion**?
- In **religion** – you try and please **god**, and then, hopefully, he will be **good** to you.
- **Work hard** – then **grace**.
- Here we have the **complete opposite**.
- Grace **first** – then **commitment**.
- What else could they **do** in response to the God who had **called** them, **delivered** them from **slavery**, **protected** them, and brought them into his **promised land**?
- How could they **NOT** commit to **following him**?
- It is the **only reasonable response** to his **very great mercy!** ///
- Brothers and sisters, we are in exactly the same **position**.
- In the NT, grace is laid **out** – then we are called to **respond**.
- So we read in Romans 12: *Therefore, I urge you, in view of God's mercy [which has been laid out so clearly and comprehensively in chs 1-11], I urge you to offer your bodies as **living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship*
- Grace **first** – then **commitment**.
- What else **can** we do in response to the God who has **called** us, **revealed himself** to us in **Jesus**, **dealt** with our sin through **Jesus' sacrifice**... given us the gift of **eternal life**...
- Offering our selves as living sacrifices is the **only reasonable response** to his **very great and wonderful mercy!** //
- But I want you to notice the surprising challenge Joshua throws at his people...
- ... v15 – *if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you*

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

will serve, whether the gods of your forefathers... or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.

- “If serving the Lord seems **UNDESIRABLE** to you?” ...**what can he be thinking!!**
- And then the **CHOICE** he gives them – the **OLD gods** of their ancestors or the **NEW gods** of the people of the land you are now occupying... // what is he **saying!??** //
- It’s like that old Bob Dylan song – which I’m not about to try and sing – but do you remember? – “you gotta serve someone...”
- He’s **deliberately provoking** them to see that if they are not going to serve the **one TRUE God**... then they must choose some **other NON-god**.
- “Come on – which will it **be?**” he says... ///
- And I say to **you** this morning...
- If serving the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ seems **undesirable** to you – choose you then this day whom you **will** serve...
- the old gods of **materialism** or **sport** or **family** or **career**...
- Or the new gods of - **me, myself, I !!!**
- Which will it **be?**
- Because you **will** serve a god – that is without **doubt**.
- **Someone** or **something** will be your **master**.
- And you will live your life in their **service**... you will become **enslaved** to **something**...
- But they are **non-gods**. They are a **nonsense**. And they have **no power** to **help** you or **save** you or give you **peace** or **comfort** or lead you to the **truth**.
- Can I ask you this morning – **whom** will **you** serve? ///
- And as for **me** and **my household**, we will serve the **Lord!!** //
- Well Israel responds and says:

2. We will [serve God]

- In fact they are quite **indignant** in their **response** – Joshua’s provocation **worked!**
- *v16 far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods*
- And then they end up recounting back to Joshua **exactly** what **he** had been telling **them** God had done for them: in rescuing them of **Egypt** and bringing them into the **promised land**.
- “God has been good to us. There is no other way.”
- “We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God. “ ///
- At one point Jesus provoked his disciples in a similar manner.
- It was at an early cross roads in his ministry... and some of the disciples turned away and stopped following him.
- So he said to the 12 who were closest...(John 6:67) *You do not want to leave too, do you?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” ///*
- What would **you** say?

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- If I was to say – come – choose which god is going to be yours... which **non existent powerless god** will be **yours**?
- Would you come back to me and say – “**no way Mark** – don’t be **absurd**... there **is** no other God, there **is** no other way...”
- God has been so **kind** to us. His mercy to us through Jesus is beyond **measure**. Jesus is the **way**, the **truth**, and the **life**.
- He **alone** has the words of **eternal life**...
- We **TOO** will serve the Lord, because he is our **God**.”

3. YOU CAN’T

- Imagine then, that I came back to you and taunted you – and again provoked you by saying – “ha – you **CAN’T** serve him – you’re not **ABLE** to serve him. He is **jealous** for your **exclusive** love... and if you try to **compromise** and try loving the **world** as **well** as him – you will fall flat on your **face**... you’ll be **out**...”
- That’s **exactly** what Joshua says in v19... *You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins...* v20 – if you **desert** him, he’ll **consume** you.
- Again – we ask – Joshua – are you **mad**? – what are you doing? Is this how they taught you at **Bible** school...? What seminar on evangelism have **YOU** been doing!! **THAT** is not how to win **converts**. //
- Do you see what he is **doing**?
- He is making **absolutely sure** that they understand that choosing to follow God is **no light matter**.
- God is not to be **toyed** with. **Mucked** around with.
- Not some one to whom you say ‘**I will serve you**’ in the comfort of church on **Sunday** and **forget** about him come **Monday**!
- Don’t you realise what sort of God you are **dealing with**?
- He is a **holy** God! A **jealous** God!
- You don’t dare come to him thinking – “it doesn’t matter how **sincere** I am about my commitment – he’s pretty fortunate I’m on **his** side...” //
- **Plenty** of people live like that **today**.
- Happy to wear the tag ‘**Christian**’ – without ever showing they understand what it actually **means**.
- Jesus commented – plenty of people call him ‘**Lord, Lord**’ but don’t do what he **says**.... In the end he will say ‘away from me – **I never knew you**’.
- This is the **product disclosure statement** if you like.
- Following Christ is **costly**. It’s **all** or **nothing**.
- What was it Jesus said? - anyone who does not carry his **cross** and follow me cannot be my **disciple** – Luke 14:27... any of you who does not give up **everything he has** cannot be my **disciple** (v35).
- **Weigh** the **cost**, before you make the **commitment**.
- Make sure you are **serious** when you profess trust in **Jesus**! //
- Can I ask you – is your claim to be Christian, **serious**? **Genuine**?
- Friends – I trust and pray that it is not something you take **lightly**... that is not something you are

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

keen about on **Sunday** and **lukewarm** the rest of the week.

- That you are not just **mouth**ing the words of the **songs**, or the **creed**... while really you are just along for the **ride**.
- I couldn't think of a more **dangerous position** to be in! God **cannot** and **will not** be **mocked!** ///

4. WE WILL

- Having heard Joshua's shocking challenge No. 2, the people said – **No** – we **WILL serve the LORD**.
- They've heard the warnings about taking it **lightly**, yet they still stand **firm** in their **desire**.
- So Joshua challenges them with the fact that they are their own **witnesses**...
- I.e. – there is to be an **accountability** among them... "this is what we've decided to do – this is what we've committed to... we will keep one another **reminded**.."
- Brothers and sisters – that's part of why we gather here week by week and in our home groups... we are **witnesses** of one **another's** commitment. We help **remind** one another of both how **wonderful** it is to serve the Lord – **AND** how **serious** it is... !

5. SO THROW AWAY FOREIGN GODS

- So Joshua's final word – v23 - "*Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."*
- If you're **serious** then about following God... there can be no **other** gods.
- It's the first of the 10 commandments – you shall have no other gods before me....
- It's **exactly** the same for us who are to love the Lord our God will all our **heart** and **soul** and **strength** and **mind**... **nothing** more **important** – nothing more **precious**, nothing more that takes the **devotion** of our **heart** before our **great** and **very wonderful God**....!
- I wonder friends, if there are any gods you have to **throw away today**, if you are to be **serious** about an **exclusive, all** or **nothing** commitment to our **Lord** and **God**?
- Anything that is keeping you from your **devotion** to the one **true God**!!
- If there **is** – go home and start **throwing!** And... yield your hearts **fully** to the Lord – the **love** of your **heart**, the **devotion**, the **affection** of your **heart**... ///
- And the people said

6. WE WILL

- **We will serve the Lord our God and obey him. //**

- want to try turning Joshua's conversation with Israel, into a **conversation** between **you** and **me**.... Like this....
- Fear and serve the Lord Jesus or choose this day whom you will serve
- **Far be it from us to serve other gods. There is no other way. We will follow Jesus.**
- You can't follow Jesus. It's too hard. He is a jealous and holy God.
- **No – we WILL follow Jesus! He alone has the words of eternal life.**
- You are witnesses that you will follow Jesus.

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- **Yes we are witnesses. We will follow him together**
- Then throw away all other gods,
- **We will love the Lord our God with all our heart and love our neighbours as ourselves.**
- As for me and my household we will serve the Lord.
- **As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.**