

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Choose]

Choose.

You and I make choices every day.

Today in our text, Joshua is telling the people of God to make a choice.
“Choose this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Just to be clear, this isn't a small choice or a foregone conclusion. He isn't asking them to decide if they want to eat at Arby's or Wendy's. In fact, Joshua isn't asking at all. Joshua is commanding the people of God to choose. They are to choose who they will serve.

The choice should be simple. God brought their forefathers out of the land of Egypt. He protected them as they crossed the Red Sea. God provided for the people through His hospitality while they lived in the wilderness. God brought the people into the Promised Land where he destroyed king after king, nation after nation, and he protected his people. God provided cities for the people they had not built. The people ate from vineyards and orchards that they themselves did not plant. God has shown an extreme level of hospitality to His people. He showed it in that He chose them. Just like He chose you.

Joshua tells the people, “Choose this day whom you will serve.”

They were in the land, weren't they? They had already received the good things that were promised them. They had marched around the city, fought in battles, driven out people from the land. What more were they supposed to do?

Like Joshua, let me tell you,

Choose this day whom you will serve.

[*What does it mean to serve?*]

The people must have felt as though it had already been decided. They boldly chose to follow God. In fact, they said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other Gods...Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God!”

Ding! Ding! Ding!

“That’s right! That’s the choice they ought to make!” You might say as you read the passage. How else were the people supposed to answer? How else *could* they answer? God has given them more than they deserved and been more hospitable than anyone might have thought possible.

Then Joshua spoils the fun.

Joshua’s response isn’t uplifting. He doesn’t pat them on the back and say, “Good job! You got it right!” instead, he tells them that they’ve chosen the impossible. They can’t serve God, Joshua says. Their sins will be their downfall, they will chase after other idols and God will consume them after having done them good.

Just like you and me.

[*Attractive Idols*]

Choose this day whom you will serve. It may seem like a foregone conclusion here. “Aren’t we already at Church?” You might say. What more could I or God possibly want you to do? Well, nothing new at all really.

Choose.

Because once you and I leave these doors there is a world of choices out there. After we have taken the body and blood of Christ, confessed our faith, and prayed together, it can be easy to leave and pursue any of the thousands of false idols that are in the world.

You and I might not sacrifice to a golden calf. In fact, I would hope that nobody here has ever made a sacrifice to a golden calf. No, I think that we have instead chosen much more “attractive” idols to worship.

Success. Money. Leisure. Self.

These are the idols you and I favor today.

In the world you and I live in, it's so easy to chase after these things. Who doesn't want to be a success, or have more money? If not for ourselves you and I might say, at least for our children. Leisure isn't a bad thing in itself, but there are times where we place a much higher value on leisure than we do the Word of God.

Still, self almost always takes the cake. I admit that I idolize self frequently. What's in it for me? I know that God says not to do this, but *I* want to! It should be fine to gossip in this circumstance because after all when *I* gossip it's just "out of concern". I should forgive, but what they did was horrible because they did it to *me*! I don't think I'm alone in this sin.

[Testimony of the Saints]

Today is All Saints Day. It's important for the people of God to take a day and remember the saints that have gone on before. Normally, I find myself just thinking about the people who have passed on this year, or maybe the past few years. Today though, I want you to think even further back than just the past year, or even the past decade.

Today I want you to think back to April 30th, 1957. On that day, the new congregation of the LC-MS in Iowa City, Iowa was established called Our Redeemer. It wasn't until October 20th, 1957 that Our Redeemer's first Pastor was called. On July 13th, 1958, ground was broken for the construction of the first church building. But I want you to think about April 30th, 1957.

On that day, faithful Lutherans established this church body.

Since then:

- Four pastors have rightly preached the word of God and correctly administered the sacraments alongside six associate pastors.
- There have been fifteen men who have come here for vicarage to be prepared for the ministry.
- Our Redeemer has had 1,355 people confirmed in the faith here.
- 1,404 people have been baptized here.

Countless people have come through the doors of Our Redeemer and heard the Gospel. They have heard that they are saved by grace through faith on account of Jesus Christ. The saints who went on before us served God faithfully.

All because they held onto the promise of God.

This was how they served God.

[*Choose Wisely*]

Choose.

Choose this day whom you will serve.

Sinful people you and I are, the temptation to serve ourselves and the countless idols out in the world will always press in on us. Cling to the promise of God who has shown the greatest hospitality to you just as He has shown it to His people throughout all time. God **CHOSE** you. He is the one who has brought you into faith, you who were once an enemy of God. The only choice you have left is to choose to serve him and cling to His promises or look to yourself and the useless idols of this world.

It isn't easy. May the words of Joshua and the testimony of the saints who have gone before you be your encouragement. They chose to serve God. They mirrored His hospitality and it showed in the way that they loved their community, the way they loved the Church. Due to their faithful service to God, you and I can worship here today in this place.

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” said Joshua.

“As for Our Redeemer, we will serve the Lord.” Is the testimony of the Saints.

As for you and me? Well, you and I have a choice to make.

Christ commands: Contribute to the needs of the saints. Therefore, **we show Hospitality.**

Choose.

Choose wisely.

So be it. Amen.

As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)
