

# MY HOUSE WILL SERVE THE LORD!

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Old Testament Lesson; Joshua 24:1-2,  
Joshua 24:14-18

Epistle Lesson; Ephesians 5:21-31

Gospel Lesson; John 6:60-69

Sermon Text; Joshua 24:1-2a  
Joshua 24:14-15

The text, or the scriptural lesson, that we will look at today is taken from Joshua, chapter 24, selected verses.

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: “Now fear the LORD and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Lead us in the way of truth. Your Word is truth.

Amen

Home sweet home.  
There is no place  
like home.

Home is where the heart is.

All of those phrases remind us of just how dear the family can be, and is, to each one of us. I know, when I was a child, growing up in a pastor's home, I was exposed to lots of hymns and lots of Bible verses. I remember one day going to my dad's study, because he had his hymn books in there. There was a hymn we had sung in church, and it just was so powerful, in my opinion! It was talking about the family, and it gave me so much comfort. I remember taking the hymnbook off of the shelf, and when I found that hymn, I thought, "*I want to memorize this!*" Here is how it goes.

### ***Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall***

*Oh, blest the house, whate're befall,  
Where Jesus Christ is all in all!  
Yea, if He were not dwelling there,  
How dark and poor and void it were.*

*Oh, blest the house where faith ye find  
And all within have set their mind  
To love their God and serve Him still  
And do in all His holy Will.*

*Oh, blest the parents who give heed  
Unto their children's foremost need  
And weary not of care or cost.  
May none to them and heav'n be lost!*

*Blest such a house; it prospers well.*

*In peace and joy the parents dwell,  
And in their children's lot is shown  
How richly God can bless His own.*

*Then here will I and mine today,  
A solemn covenant make and say:  
“Though all the world forsake Thy Word,  
I and my house will serve the Lord!”*

What a beautiful summary of the scriptural teaching that **when Christ is the head of the home, there is peace, joy, love, comfort, and blessing, no matter what the trials, no matter what the troubles.**

Our LORD honors the institution of the family. God, Himself, instituted family in the Garden of Eden. And, think about when our Lord Jesus performed His first miracle. Where was it? It was at a wedding, where a young man and a young woman were united in holy marriage, and they came in need. They were in need of wine for their wedding festival. Our Lord Jesus provided for their needs. How He honored marriage, by performing His first miracle at a marriage feast, taking care of the needs of that young couple! Our Lord Jesus honors marriage in a very special way. In all of the ways that Jesus could compare His relationship to you and me, as His believers, He compares us to a bride. Probably the most powerful picture that scripture uses of the relationship of Christ to you, as one of His believers, is the relationship we read about in today's lesson from the Epistle, where it describes Jesus as the groom and His church as the bride. I want you to think about that picture a little bit, because it is such a powerful picture. I don't know, for those of you guys who are married, if you remember when your wife picked out her wedding dress. I remember, to some degree, when Sherri picked hers out. I remember thinking to myself, *“She is going to look beautiful in whatever she picks.”* I remember

her trying on these beautiful, white, wedding dresses. And, the thought that kept going through my head was, “*I wonder what it is going to cost?*”

When we think about Jesus, who calls you His bride, and in Ephesians it says that He has clothed you with this beautiful wedding dress, think about what it cost Him. Think about what it cost our Lord Jesus to dress you in that wedding dress, that wedding garment. It did not cost 200, 300, 500, 800, or a \$1,000.00. What did it cost our Savior to dress up His bride?

“Husbands,  
love your wives,  
just as Christ  
loved the church  
and gave Himself up for her.”

**It cost Christ His life.** He shed His blood to purchase a wedding dress for His bride. The Bible says He has dressed you with that dress, without spot, or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. He has covered you up with His righteousness, His holiness. Now, He presents you to Himself having purchased you at a huge price, and covered you with that wedding dress, that wedding garment that cost Him His life. He sees you, now, as clean, holy, righteous, spotless, and forgiven. Wow! What a way that scripture honors marriage, when it compares our relationship to Christ that way.

So, anyway, think about that picture of Christ, and how He has dressed you up. He has justified you. He has declared you not guilty. He has covered you in that wedding garment that He purchased for you at great price.

I remember being at the Youth Convention out in Washington, earlier this summer, and sitting in the church service where all of these youth, from all over the nation were gathered together. Every now and then, there is something in a worship service that just

strikes you. I remember the pastor got to the part in the church service where he was saying a prayer called “The Collect.” I am just going to read a part of what he prayed, because something he said in there just hit me. Here is what he prayed.

***“We beseech You, graciously to protect us by Your Holy Spirit, that we might not fall into sin. And, if we fall and defile our wedding garment with which Your Son has clothed us, graciously help us again, and lead us to repentance that we fall not forever. Preserve us in a constant faith in Your grace.”***

Did you hear the part of that prayer, ***“if we fall and defile our wedding garment”***? That struck me. What bride would want her wedding garment to get defiled? What bride would want to spill food or anything else on her wedding garment? She would want to keep it clean, because it is so important to her. What Christian, knowing the wedding garment that Christ has provided for us, at the cost of His own life, with His blood, purchased us as His bride, and He has dressed us up clean and holy, what Christian would want to defile that wedding garment? We want to live holy, God-pleasing lives for the sake of our Savior.

Which gets me to what Joshua said to all of the people, as they were gathered before him, as they were in the land of Israel. Joshua made a challenge to the people. These were people who believed in God, and his challenge was that they recommit themselves to what we would call 'a life of sanctification', to a life of striving not to defile that wedding garment with which they were dressed, to live for their Savior. He said to them,

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...  
as for me and my household,  
we will serve the LORD.”

Joshua had, by God's grace, led the Children of Israel into the land of Canaan. The Children of Israel had defeated all of their enemies.

Now, the Children of Israel were in the land. They possessed the land. They lived in the towns. They lived in the cities. They lived in the houses. And so, Joshua called them all together, as he was about to die. He recounted all of the gracious things that God had done for them. He recounted for them how God, in His grace and mercy, had led them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He recounted for the Children of Israel, how God had, in His mercy and grace, had delivered them at the Red Sea, how they had been able to pass through the Red Sea, by a miracle of God's power. He relayed for them how God, in His grace and mercy, had led them through the desert for forty years and had provided for all of their needs, their food and their clothing. It had all been provided for. He reminded them how the LORD had led them into the land of Canaan on conquest, and how the LORD had caused the walls of Jericho to fall down, how the LORD had driven out all of the enemies, how the LORD had given them homes that they did not build. He had given them vineyards they did not plant. He had given them olive groves they did not plant. All of this, from the gracious, gracious hand of the LORD. Having referred to all the grace and mercy of God, then Joshua said to the people, *“Now choose, choose whom you will serve. Will you serve God, who has done all of those gracious things for you, or would you prefer to serve the gods of the Amorites, or the gods that your forefathers worshiped in Egypt or across the Euphrates River?”*

Let's talk about those other gods that were in the land, that were tempting the Children of Israel. Who were the gods of the Amorites? Sometimes the word 'Amorite' just refers in general to all of the different tribes that lived in Canaan. But, the primary gods of the Amorites were a male, and female counterpart, called Baal and Ashtoreth. It was a religion. The religion of Baal and Ashtoreth was a religion that was based on sexual perversity. It was a fertility religion, that tempted people into many different types of sexual

immorality. For example, we find in scripture that on occasions, the Bible tells us, that the young Canaanite women of the land invited the Israelite men to worship their god, and the young men fell into sexual immorality. So, it was a religion based on sexual immorality. It was very tempting to the sinful nature, very tempting to the sinful nature. Joshua asked the people, “*Who will you serve? Will you serve God? All of the gracious things that He has done for you. Or, will you serve the god of the Amorites?*”

It is not all that different, today, is it? The book of Ecclesiastes says, “There is nothing new under the sun.”

Kevin Randal, (who happens to have a Christian counseling service and is a member here at Holy Cross), told me a staggering statistic the other day. Did you know that if you were to take all of the pro sports, (professional football, baseball, basketball, hockey, etc.) and all of the money that is spent on pro sports in the United States of America, if you would combine all of the money that gets spent on them, it is less than what is spent, in this nation, in one year on pornography. That is staggering. But, it shows who one of the gods of this nation is and who this nation sometimes serves. It is not much different than it was in the days of the Children of Israel. They were tempted to serve the gods of sexual immorality. And those are temptations that come into the Christian home yet today. They come into the Christian home.

### **Here is the call to recommitment.**

**Who will you serve?** Who will you serve in your home? Will you serve the God who has purchased you and won you at a great price and dressed you up in that holy robe of His righteousness, or will you serve other gods?

What about the other gods? He also asked them, “*Will you serve the gods that your forefathers worshiped in Egypt, or across the Euphrates River?*” We don't even know who some of those gods were. They were little, no-name gods, but some of them were

tempting to the Children of Israel. And the same is true today. There are many things that Christian families may start to serve, other than the true God. It could be many nameless things. It could be money. It could be popularity. It could be entertainment. Whatever it may be, here is the call to the Christian family,

**“Choose for yourselves this day,  
whom you will serve...  
As for me and my household,  
we will serve the LORD.”**

Joshua motivated them simply with the grace of God. *“Look at what God has done for you. Look at what He has done for you!”* And all of the people responded, *“We too will serve the LORD.”*

**“We will serve the LORD.”**

Let's recommit ourselves to that promise. We want to serve the LORD, in our homes and in our families. We want to serve the LORD and put Him first.

I want to tell you a sad thing. This text is from Joshua, chapter 24. It is the last chapter in the book of Joshua. At the end of the chapter, he dies. Then we go from Joshua, to the book of Judges. When we get to Judges, chapter two, it recounts the fact that Joshua died. It says, “Joshua died and then the whole generation that was with him.”

And then it says, “There arose a new generation that neither served the LORD, nor remembered all that He had done. They went and followed after and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths”

So, in one generation, in one generation those households fell away from the LORD. But, did you notice why? It says they did not serve the LORD, because they did not remember what He had done for them. They didn't remember what He had done for them! Now, why was that? Was it because the parents did not continually remind the children what the LORD had done for them? Or, was it the fact that the children heard it, but they did not pick it up, cling to

it, and make it their own? I don't know what it was. But, today, let's recommit ourselves to making sure, in our homes, that as parents, or as grandparents, we continue to remind our families the great things that God has done for us. And, as young people, you pick them up, you cling to those, and you make those your own.

What are the great things that God has done for us, and does for us, every day? When we say our meal prayers, we are thanking God for providing us food. When we recount that God kept us safe on a trip, we thank God for His provision and care. We thank God and we remember that it is only by God's grace that we are able to forgive one another's sins in our family, and that our family is provided for, whether through good, or through trials in our lives. We should recount those things, and thank the LORD for them, in our family.

But, most of all, we should always keep first and foremost what Christ has done for our family. He has dressed each of us, each of us in that wedding garment, that cost Him His own dear life, so that He could purchase us and present us to Himself, clean and holy.

Someday, by grace, we will all be able to be together in Heaven, because of what Christ has done for us. And as a family, we strive not to defile that wedding garment, but to live for our Savior, in everything we say, everything we do, and how we treat one another. I want to close by reading that entire prayer, that was read at our Youth Convention. This is a deep prayer. It is a prayer that we live a sanctified life, based on what Christ has done for us.

Let's fold our hands, bow our heads, and pray for ourselves, individually, and also for our families.

***Lord God, Heavenly Father,***

***We thank You that of Your great mercy, You have called us by Your Holy Word, to the blessed marriage feast of Your Son.***

***Through Him, You forgive us of all sins.***

***But, being daily assaulted by temptation, offense, and danger, and***

*being weak in ourselves, and given to sin, we ask You graciously to protect us by Your Holy Spirit that we might not fall into sin. And, if we fall and defile our wedding garment, which Your Son has clothed us with, graciously help us again, and lead us to repentance, that we fall not forever.*

*Preserve us in a constant faith in Your grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. One true God, now and forever.*

*Amen*