

Sunday AM Service ~ June 25, 2023

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. ² Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. ³ For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth & the mountain peaks belong to him. ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it & his hands formed the dry land. ⁶ Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; ⁷ for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Let's Pray. Sovereign Lord, what a great privilege it is to come into your presence this morning. To be able to sing to the rock of our salvation. To be able to come before you in thanksgiving and to praise you with music and song. To be able to humble ourselves in worship, to pray to our maker & to place ourselves under your sovereign care.

We admit that we don't come to you often enough, and we don't thank you enough, nor are we humble enough, dependent enough, passionate enough. Please forgive us. Forgive us because for everything we have done wrong, whether we have done or said or acted in the wrong way or failed to do, say or act in the right way, that wrongdoing meant that your Son Jesus had to die on the cross to forgive us that sin. So we thank you for Jesus. May he become more and more real to us today as we sing, listen, pray, reflect and commit this time to you now. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song – Sooner Count the Stars

<https://vimeo.com/248230516>

1. I could sooner count the stars
Than number all Your ways
Though I only know in part
That part exceeds all praise
As sunlight fills the skies
Your goodness fills my life
For all Your precious gifts
Receive my gratefulness

2. I could sooner drink the seas
Than fathom all Your love
Like a never ceasing stream
Are mercies through Your Son
The death of Christ alone
Deserves eternal song
For such a love as His
Receive my gratefulness

CHORUS

No praise is high enough
No thanks is deep enough
No life is long enough
To tell of all You've done
No shout is loud enough
No words are strong enough
No song is sweet enough
To sing Your love

3. I could sooner turn back time
Than turn Your heart away
Though the years go fleeting by
Your mercies never change
Before You made the sun
Your love was set on us
For all Your faithfulness
Receive my gratefulness

Bible Reading – Joshua 24:1-17 (NIV)

"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. ² Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. ³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, ⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his

family went down to Egypt. ⁵ “Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. ⁶ When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. ⁷ But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you & the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time. ⁸ “I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land. ⁹ When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. ¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand. ¹¹ “Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. ¹² I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. ¹³ So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’ ¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD & serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” ¹⁶ Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled. ¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”

Announcements 25/6/23

Focus for the month – Mission. It is important that we are committed to worldwide mission but we should also have an emphasis on mission to our indigenous brothers and sisters. The Presbyterian church has been active in this throughout its history and currently has indigenous workers in Western Sydney and with Australian Indigenous Ministries. One of our link missionaries the Webs works with Indigenous people in Broome. Is there a work among our own indigenous brothers and sisters that you could support? (By the way the next Newcastle Men’s Ministry is entitled Real Reconciliation and features indigenous preacher Neville Naden, you might try and come along to that?)

Hamilton. With Presbytery favouring the Charlestown church proposal to partner with Hamilton Presbyterian Church, the hard work begins now. It means that

- Stephen is now Interim Moderator responsible for the work at Hamilton
- We begin talking with Hamilton seriously about how we might do things in the future
- We are responsible to organise the weekly preaching programme
- We can talk to a potential evangelist/minister with a view to a move in 2024
- And in early August we as a Church will decide whether we want to proceed with this partnership.

Please keep this in your prayers regularly.

Prayer meetings. Please try and come to one of our two Church wide prayer meetings this week. They will be held at Charlestown Church on Tuesday 27th June (6:45pm BYO dinner, 7:30pm prayer time) and Wednesday (12:30pm BYO lunch, 1:15pm prayer).

100th Anniversary. Do you have any photos that we could use for our anniversary? Would you be willing to write a paragraph or two about a significant event that happened to you or someone else in this place? Do you know anyone we could invite to our special anniversary service and lunch on Sunday 12th November? If you do, please see Annette, Sarah, Peter H or Stephen T.

Family Fellowship. Next family fellowship is scheduled for Sunday 25th June from 2-4pm. Meet at Green Point Car Park then a walk/scooter for 45 minutes, have an afternoon tea (each bring a plate) and then a walk back home. All families with kids in the Year 3-9 age are invited.

Morning Tea Routine. Each Sunday morning tea is provided for the adults and kids of our Church. We ask that parents help us to ensure that their kids do not eat from the adults table until all the adults have come out of Church and have been served. Hot drinks are not to be served to the kids as we care for our smaller ones moving around at morning tea.

Help Needed for Mission Soup night. Next Sunday 2nd July, the Sunday@6 service is a mission night and will be followed by a dinner of soup and rolls. If you are able to contribute to the night by providing a pot of soup, please advise Margaret Wright. Please include the type of soup you will bring in any messages.

Ladies Walking Group. We are commencing a ladies walking group which will run on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. Meet at 9.45am for a 10 am start. We will walk for an hour ending near a coffee shop. BYO morning tea and/or buy a coffee after walking. Group is open to church ladies and friends of all ages. First outing will be on Tuesday 20th June and the second outing on Tuesday 4th July. For both days, meet at Warners Bay Esplanade near the Table Tennis table. Contact Margaret Wright for further details.

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for our Church as it deals with the big issues of grief amongst its members, partnering with Hamilton Presbyterian, redeveloping its Charlestown buildings and trying to help the new people that have been coming to find their home amongst us.

Pray for **the families of Hunter Valley Bus Crash** as they grieve and look to find a way forward. Pray that the God of all comfort will lead them to the comfort they desire.

Pray for Wee Waa Presbyterian Church. Thank God for a restful holiday with family in the UK for the Bagnall's and for their safe return to pastoral duties. Pray for the ongoing success of the Bridge to Community gathering, with 34 attendees at the last gathering. Thank God for two people who have accepted Christ recently and joined the Church. With 5 months to go before the Parish loses their minister, pray that God will provide a replacement for Steve Bignall and ensure that goodwill remains within the congregation.

Pray for Burkino Faso. Jihadist activity is expanding and many Churches and Christian schools are being forced to close. That God will heal and comfort all those severely traumatised by jihadist attacks. For continued wisdom and provision for Open Doors as they link with local Churches and support them in this difficult environment. For the protection of believers in the country.

Song – Who is on the Lords side [Who is on the Lord's side - YouTube](#)

1. Who is on the Lord's side? Who will serve the King?
Who will be His helpers, other lives to bring?
Who will leave the world's side? Who will face the foe?
Who is on the Lord's side? Who for Him will go?
By Thy call of mercy, by Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!
2. Jesus, Thou hast bought us, not with gold or gem,
But with Thine own lifeblood, for Thy diadem;
With Thy blessing filling each who comes to Thee,
Thou hast made us willing, Thou hast made us free.
By Thy grand redemption, by Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!

3. Fierce may be the conflict, strong may be the foe,
But the King's own army none can overthrow;
'Round His standard ranging, vict'ry is secure,
For His truth unchanging makes the triumph sure.
Joyfully enlisting, by Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!
4. Chosen to be soldiers, in an alien land,
Chosen, called, and faithful, for our Captain's band;
In the service royal, let us not grow cold,
Let us be right loyal, noble, true and bold.
Master, wilt Thou keep us, by Thy grace divine,
Always on the Lord's side—Savior, always Thine!

Bible Reading – Joshua 24:1-16

¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, "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. ²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." ²¹ But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD." ²² Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied. ²³ "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." ²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him." ²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. ²⁶ And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD. ²⁷ "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God." ²⁸ Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to their own inheritance. ²⁹ After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ³⁰ And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ³¹ Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel. ³² And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants. ³³ And Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.

Sermon – Improve your serve (Stephen T)

I love the story of James Kraft, a young man with a dream. To sell cheese not just in his own town but all around the world. So, when he left school, he started making his cheese early in the day and then he would saddle up his pony named Paddy and he would walk around the streets of Chicago selling his cheese. But in the early days there was a problem, he wasn't making any money from selling his cheese and it was hard work and his days were long.

One day he got so desperate he started talking to Paddy the pony. He said "there must be something wrong. We can't be doing it right. I'm afraid I don't have my priorities right. So, from now on we should serve God first and place him first in our lives." So, he made an agreement with God that he would serve him in all of his life, especially in the work place and that was when KRAFT cheese really took off.

Slide 2

Well at the end of a long & successful life, Joshua summons the people of Israel together & gets them to sign an agreement to put God first in their life. He delivers his message to the people of Israel one last time

by saying *“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me & my household, we will serve the Lord”*

Slide 3

And after we have looked at this passage together, I am going to challenge you as to whom you are going to serve? Who will you put first in your life? Your family? Your home? Your health? Your bank balance? They are the modern gods of this world. Or are you going to serve the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Today I am going to give you a chance to affirm your faith in confession, in song and in action. But first we are going to look at the God we serve, then the call to serve, the problem with our service before we finally look at a few of God’s servants. Let’s begin then with

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1. The God we serve. (Verses 1-13)

“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.”

You see Joshua in this last chapter of the book that bears his name is about to renew the covenant, the agreement between God and His people. He knows his time is short. And so, he calls his people to remember the God that they serve is a gracious God. And he gives his people a whirlwind tour of their history, starting at the very beginning with Abraham.

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“Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. ³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan & gave him many descendants.”

Now did you notice that Abraham didn’t seek after God? No, he, along with his family, were worshipping other gods but he was chosen by God, out from amongst a people who worshipped false gods, because of God’s grace. In the words of John Calvin, *“Abraham did not emerge from profound ignorance and the abyss of error by his own virtue but was drawn out by the hand of God.”* God took him by the land & led him into the promised land & there made him promises. He would become the father of a great nation.

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But God’s grace also was delivered at God’s pace. Because look at what happened next. *“I gave him Isaac, ⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob & Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob & his family went down to Egypt”* Abraham was promised many descendants but he got only one child through Sarah. But please notice that the grandchild of the promise, Jacob, didn’t even get the promised land he got slavery in Egypt for some 400 years. Whereas Abraham’s other grandchild Esau got his own patch of ground almost straight away.

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How strange is God’s ways? But it is not about speed but faithfulness. It is not about the microwave result but the slow cooker. God choose and then God rescued. ⁵ *“Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. ⁶ When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. ⁷ But they cried to the Lord for help, and he put darkness between you & the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians.”*

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He chose, he rescued & then he guided. *“Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time. ⁸”* *“I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan.”* And then God fought for his people. *“They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you and you took possession of their land.”* Before finally Joshua said, God gives.

¹³ “So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.” At every stage & on every page of Israel’s history we see God’s grace. God’s sovereign grace. God says I took, I gave, I sent, I defeated, I brought, I rescued. The end result is that everything that the people of God have now is down to the God whom they serve.

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And that is the same God we serve today. And that God hasn’t changed. He is still showering his people with grace and still doing it at his pace and not ours. Think about our history for a moment. The Church went to the Gentiles in the book of Acts. It was reformed in the 16th century under Luther, Calvin and Knox by the rediscovery of grace. It was sent with the first fleet when our nation began. It came in the early days of the colony to Newcastle. And in recent times when our church looked like it may not survive it was revived due to the grace of God by the hard work of some sacrificial saints, some of whom are still with us today.

But what about your story? Whether you were brought up in a Christian home or a non-Christian home you are only here because of God’s grace. God has chosen you and fought for you and brought you and given you so much. In the same way we see God’s gracious fingerprints all over the history of Israel and all over the Church’s story, we also see them all over our history as well, don’t we? And we can ill afford to forget the God whom we serve.

While I was training to be a minister, I had a mentor Greg Smith whom I was attached to as a student. A couple of years after I graduated, he got ill with cancer and passed away as a young man. But his last words were “I don’t know who is with me but whoever you are, please know that you are only saved by God’s grace.” The God we serve is a God of grace.

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2. The call to Serve (Verses 14-18)

Which is why, Joshua changes gears with his “Now fear the LORD & serve him with all faithfulness.” If God is a God worthy of serving, then we should serve Him. It is a bit like what Paul does in the book of Romans. For 11 chapters he explains the gospel of grace and then he changes gears at the start of chapter 12 by saying, “I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable worship.” For God’s grace has implications. You respond to God’s grace with faith. If God is a God worthy to be served, then serve him. And him alone.

Joshua is not just running a political rally and asking for the people to vote 1 for God. Joshua is not just writing down what God has done and said, read what is in God’s word. Joshua is saying give yourself fully to Him. Live for him. Serve Him exclusively.

¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD & serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Friends make no mistake we are all serving someone. Bob Dylan wrote the song “You gotta serve somebody” & in it he made the point that whoever you are and whatever you do you are serving someone. And in the chorus he said “Well it may be the devil or it may be the Lord but your gonna have to serve someone.” Apparently, John Lennon thought this song so embarrassing that he wrote his own song “Serve Yourself.” His lyric only backed up Dylan’s main point. Lennon wrote “You gotta serve yourself, ain’t nobody gonna do it for you.”

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You see Joshua is saying it's all or nothing. Serve the Lord. Or serve someone else or something else or serve yourself. But whatever direction you go, you have to go all in. Which reminds me of the story of the pig and chicken wondering what they could do to help the poor. And the chicken says, 'I've got an idea we could make them bacon and eggs for breakfast. No way said the pig. 'For you it means just a contribution but for me it means total commitment.' Joshua likewise is saying to the people you have to go the whole hog. You must fear God. You must serve God. You must worship God exclusively.

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Which means that all the idols have to go. All of them. ²³ *"Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."* Throw them away. Get rid of them. In William Cowper's words *"The dearest idol I have known, Whate'er that idol be, Help me tear it from Thy throne, And worship only Thee."*

Joshua's call comes down to us through the ages. If this is the God who has served us, then we should serve Him exclusively. We need to get rid of any idol, anything, any person, any object that is getting in the way of the Lord. Because we are all serving someone or something. And so if we are putting home and family, money and work, leisure or pleasure before the Lord it will not just affect our service of the Lord. It will offend our God because he wants our exclusive worship. In the same way you don't share your toothbrush, you don't share your devotion to the Lord with anyone or anything else.

So, another Sunday comes around and we all have a choice. Will we worship God or worship something else? We might not find ourselves in Church on that Sunday but if we never find time to worship our God on that Sunday then there is an idol we need to get rid of. But it is the same story on a Monday too. Whom are we going to serve? And if we never get around to serving God on a Monday, if we have never given ourselves to him that day as a living sacrifice, then that means there are things before the Lord that need to be weeded out.

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So, can I ask you, are there habits that are in your life that need to be weeded out? Are their spending priorities that need to be reprioritised? Is there a commitment to an activity that has to change because you realise today that God must come first. Serving God must be the number 1 priority. Worshipping God must come before the worship of anything else. And this leads us to Joshua's third point. And it's a shocking one.

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3. You can't serve the Lord. (Verses 19-24)

¹⁹ *Joshua said to the people, "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"*

Now wait a second Joshua. You just said that you and your household were going to serve the Lord and now you tell everyone else that they won't be able to serve the Lord! What on earth is going on there? Well, I think Joshua knows well the human heart. It is so easy for us to say that we are going to do something but we so often never get around to doing it. It is easy for us to say that we love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength but when push comes to shove, we never really love God like that.

So, for example think of the generation before Joshua. Moses had just received from the Lord the 10 commandments and he hands them over to the people of God and they all say "We will do all that the Lord has spoken." (Exodus 19:8). And yet just a couple of weeks later they were worshipping a golden calf. And to be honest I am not much better. I am at my weakest on a Sunday night. I have spent the day worshipping the Lord and being with God's people but I know when I am tired and worn out that the devil will always strike.

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The thing is we will never be able to perfectly serve our Lord. No matter how hard we try. And so, if the Israelites are going to renew this covenant that God had made with Abraham and then with Moses and now he is making again with the people of Joshua's time, then yes, they will get the blessings if they keep the covenant but the flip side to that is that they will get the curses if they break any of its regulations. God has been gracious to you and has served you but remember whom you are serving.

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"He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you."

God is not a mate. God is not a chum. He is a Holy God. Who can't stand sin and injustice and faithfulness. Yahweh is not a soft, cuddly Santa who will give you a present whether you have been good or not. He is someone with x-ray vision who sees not just what you do but what you are thinking and feeling and desiring. And he knows that God's people are like an unfaithful bride, he knows that they are like an ungrateful child. He knows that they are like an obstinate donkey.

Now the purpose of Joshua's words here are not to drive us away from God. We are not to throw up our hands and say it's not even worth trying. No Joshua wants us to be real about what we say. Not flippant but fearful not casual but cautious. Not half cocked but fully devoted. Because we know that humanity hasn't changed one little bit.

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You see Christians today don't have a good track record with our commitment to the Lord either. We have read the % of those who went forward at the Billy Graham crusades and who never kept their word or their commitments. We know of people that once were worshipping with us every week, sometimes twice a week whose circumstances have changed and now seem to have lost their faith. And we know that when an evangelist calls people to come to the front and make a decision that most of the people who come are making a recommitment because their previous commitment wasn't good enough.

Joshua calls the people back to their God and then says, not so fast. Count the cost. Are you willing to take up the cross? Do you realise that the Christian life is not a bed of roses? Friend you are not signing up for an easy life here. In fact, you're not able to serve the Lord. You're not counting the cost. You're rushing into this. You've underestimated the persistent wickedness of your rebel hearts and the power of your remaining sin. So, before you make that life changing decision, let's look at one more thing, let's look at God's servants.

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4. God's Servants (verses 25-33)

For the book of Joshua ends with three dead bodies. It ends with a sobering realism. For firstly we read of the death of Joshua himself. ²⁹*"After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ³⁰ And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash."*

Joshua is given the title, the Lord's Servant. The same words used of Moses when he died. Joshua had been good to his word. He had served the Lord faithfully. But death still intervenes. It cuts short the life of faith. It brings his blessings of the land and people to a close. He had made a massive impact on the people of God. Led them into the promised land. But, even a servant of the Lord can't do everything.

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For we read in the very next verse *"Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel."* Israel followed Joshua's lead and were also God's servants while he and his fellow elders were alive. But we find out in

Judges 2 that after they died, they started worshipping idols again. The people's faith dies soon after the servant of God dies.

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And what's more, we read *"And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants."* You see the Israelites have been carrying Joseph's bones with them for last 50-60 years and they finally get to bury them in the land that God had promised him. But let me point out the obvious. He's dead. He can't enjoy it. He can't see the fulfilment of the promise with his own eyes, can he?

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What's more *"Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim."* Yes, these three burials remind us that God has kept his promises. He has brought his people into the land of promise. But death eats into these blessings & reminds them and us that we are going to need a better leader than Joshua. We going to need a better hero than Joseph, we are going to need a better priest than Eleazer & we are going to need someone who can defeat the scourge of death.

If we can't serve the Lord; if God's servants can't stay alive to provide us with the example or the help or the support or the encouragement to serve the Lord, then where is our hope? It's in one who did die and then rose again. It is in one who gives us even better promises than the one given to Abraham. It is in one who gives us a better inheritance than what Joshua hands out. It is in the one who is the perfect saviour, the perfect high priest and the perfect servant of the Lord. Jesus.

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Yes, we can't serve the Lord but he did. Perfectly. And so if we put our trust in Him. If we run to him. If we cling to Him. Then not only does he help us stand in the presence of the holy God due to his righteousness. But he takes our weak and feeble efforts at service and makes them acceptable in God's sight.

So if you want to improve your serve, look to the servant King. Trust in the God of grace, he is the one we serve. And choose this day whom you are going to serve. For as for me and my house we are serving the Lord. But before you do that make sure you count the cost.

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In 1638, the Scottish reformers drafted a document that became known as *"The National Covenant."* That document was a call that thousands upon thousands of Scots took up to renew their commitment to the gospel against all the attempts by King Charles to undermined the advances secured by the reformation. They stood up to be counted among the faithful. They were determined that they and their house would serve the Lord.

But what happened next? Most of those who signed that covenant died under the English oppression. To stand up and serve for them was a costly business. And it will be costly for us as well. Jesus says take up the cross and follow me. Jesus says to us, *"Don't just give me your leftovers; I want it all. Not just now but for the rest of your life"*. You might say, I can't take it up, it's too difficult! And Jesus says I will carry you. I will strengthen you. I will be with you.

Slide 24

So who are you going to serve today? And tomorrow? And in the weeks to come? I want to serve the Lord. Will you join me? Together as weak, imperfect brothers and sisters in Christ let us follow our servant King where ever he leads us in this world and onto the promised land in the world to come. For that's what the book of Joshua is really all about.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
 and born of the virgin Mary.
 He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to hell.
 On the third day he rose again from the dead.
 He ascended to heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
 From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic* church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

* 'Catholic' in this sense just means 'universal', the universal heavenly church, not just 'Roman Catholic'.

Song – This I believe - [YouTube](#)

1. Our Father everlasting
 The all-creating One
 God Almighty
 Through your Holy Spirit
 Conceiving Christ the Son
 Jesus our Saviour

Chorus

I believe in God our Father
 I believe in Christ the Son
 I believe in the Holy Spirit
 Our God is three in One
 I believe in the resurrection
 That we will rise again
 For I believe in the Name of Jesus
 (In the name o' Lord)

2. Our Judge and our Defender
 Suffered and crucified
 Forgiveness is in You
 Descended into darkness
 You rose in glorious light
 Forever seated high

Chorus

Bridge
 I believe in You
 I believe You rose again
 I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord
 (Repeat)

Chorus

3. I believe in life eternal
 I believe in the virgin birth
 I believe in the saints' communion
 And in Your Holy Church
 I believe in the resurrection
 When Jesus comes again
 For I believe in the Name of Jesus

Chorus

Benediction “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 22:5)