

WELCOME 3rd September 2023 – 14th Sunday after Pentecost '23 A

Joshua 24:1-24

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands **Growing Praise** inserts & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link will be on website...Tuesday...Wednesday... **AND HAPPY FATHER'S DAY! PRAY IT'S BLESSED!**

As we move into this week...

Noted early-childhood educator & trainer of teachers/parents, **Ann** VanLoenen, often **said**, "Everybody's dysfunctional. Some of us are just more open about it in public." Most of us will smile at her wry humour & acknowledge the truth of that statement from our own experience. **"Well** I'm not perfect" is how we say it about ourselves... but about others we are often less than understanding....or kind.

Families, like any other group of people, function best when they live toward a common goal or purpose...making the family farm or business thrive...living up to a standard set by a previous generation. Might just be wanting to give your kids a less difficult life than you experienced. **But** every family has some kind of legacy or imprint it seeks to establish and pass on. Every. Family.

Today, Joshua calls the people of Israel, who are now one enormous extended family, to declare in their hearts, homes & lives that legacy...imprint...purpose. Who will they trust to establish them as a nation for generations to come? Who will they trust to build & secure their legacy into the future? **So** *fear the Lord & serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River & in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live?*

Who WILL YOU serve? How they & we answer that question sets the course for any functionality in our families & communities. We'll explore & experience that together as **WE** affirm with Joshua: **But** *as for me & my family, we will serve the Lord.* It's there that we discard dysfunction & receive the fullness of life only God in Jesus offers...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, our God, by the work of the Spirit alive in us, open our eyes to behold the power of your word. Illuminate our understanding, & above all...quicken our lives in obedience...that those around us in your wonderful wider world would see in us the glorious life of your Son Jesus & fall freely into his saving love...In Jesus' Name... Amen.

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT: Today...a little game called

WHAT WOULD THE NEIGHBOURS SAY?

If I were to ask, "What would you say is most important to _____?"

What really sets them apart from anyone else on the street?

What would you like them to say?

14 PENTECOST '23 A – ~~DysFUNCTIONAL~~: ~~DysFUNCTIONAL~~ FAMILIES

Vincit qui se vincit...The one who conquers; conquers self. Wagga High School's motto. It makes sense...the real battle is here ...inside. To triumph over my shortcomings & hardships is the real victory. Try another: *In hoc signo vinces*...Under this sign † you conquer. Originally Emperor Constantine's army & the Crusaders of the Middle Ages, now the slogan of a fraternity on US uni campuses...loses something there. Maybe you're familiar w/ this one? Forward *in* Faith. Yep...The Armorial Bearings of Wagga Wagga...© 1965. **THAT** was/is our local motto. I like the way it's described... Armorial *Bearings*. "Bearings" is a word used in sailing to mean "direction/course." I suspect that was what our city leaders intended back then...that "faith" would set the course & guide the progress for our city. How're we doin' w/ that these days?

I've mentioned at least once the little gift my dad gave me @ 18th b-day...Plaque. It's about the honour/weighty responsibility of carrying the Guilfoyle name in public. I've not always lived up to that expectation TBH. But like the city's "bearings," it has often served as a timely reminder, or course correction. (*when you give it to your son*) You've often heard me say "if you aim at nothing you're sure to hit it." Knowing what you are trying to achieve, what the goal is, the purpose or object of an activity...the vision/mission of an organization...called by God to be a vibrant Xn community that glorifies God by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace & go in his power to show his love to the world...Once you know that & say, "Yes that's me!" You have your bearings...direction...course...path for living into that destined future.

For God's people it started here: *"Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. (is One) You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul & all your strength. You must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again & again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home & when you are on the road, when you are going to bed & when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands & wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house & on your gates. - Dt 6:4-9* One God. Total devotion. Undivided allegiance. Complete dedication to His Word in all things. Once you know that/say, "Yes that's me!" you have your bearings...direction...course...path for living into that destined future.

It is this God, Moses says who freed you from slavery, brought you from death in bondage to life in his presence & provision, & offers you abundance under his protection as you live responsive to this relationship of love he has started with you. *"So fear the Lord & serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River & in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the*

Amorites in whose land you now live? As Joshua continues leading God's people...now fully at home in the land God promised...he reminds them that in life there is always a fork in the road...always a moment where that single-hearted faith will be tested ...always another bid for our affection & loyalty...always some ancient echo or "what's trending now" challenging & tugging at your heart. (CS Lewis life's not a battlefield but auction yard) In that *context*...

Joshua invites each hearer into profound gratitude for the unmerited graciousness of God. It's easy to see our OT faith ancestors as almost glowing holy characters. Until you hear Joshua recount what God says/does...*Long ago your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham & Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River, & they worshiped other gods.* Back in the day y'all was pagans. That's what he said. But God also says this...follow along in Josh 24:3ff..

BUT I TOOK your ancestor Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates & **I led** him into the land of Canaan. **I gave** him many descendants...**I brought** plagues on Egypt...**I brought** you out of Egypt as a free people...When your ancestors cried out, **I put** darkness ^{b/t} you & the Egyptians. **I brought** the sea crashing down on the Egyptians...**I brought** you into the land of the Amorites...**I destroyed** them before you. **I gave** you victory over them, & you took possession of their land...**I made** Balaam bless you, & so **I rescued** you...the 7 nations of Canaan fought against you...But **I gave** you victory over them...It was not your swords or bows that brought you victory. **I gave** you land you had not worked on. **I gave** you towns you did not build...**I gave** you vineyards & olive groves for food, though you did not plant them. Every square centimeter of land they inhabit is from God's hand to them. Every blessing. Every moment. Every rescue...Every. Single. Day.

Joshua invites each hearer into profound gratitude for the unmerited graciousness of God that has opened the way ^{b/4} them, watched over them, journeyed beside them, & pursued them every single step of their lives from Ur of the Chaldeans where Terah lived *beyond the Euphrates* to this moment in the land that is now theirs. But just like those conversations my dad & I had to have...about decisions I was making, choices w/ which I was confronted, & the paths I might take...Joshua knows profound gratitude lived in a responsive obedient relationship w/ Yahweh is a dice throw some days. He knows there is no straight line from being blessed to thankful responsive obedient living. Sometimes there's no line at all...Moses warned of the dangers of living in this land flowing w/ milk/honey...flourishing in God's graciousness: *"When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. That is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the Lord your God & disobey his commands, regulations, & decrees that I am giving you today. For when you have become full & prosperous & have built fine homes to live in, & when your flocks & herds have become very large & your silver & gold have multiplied along*

with everything else, be careful! Do not become proud at that time & forget the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt. Do not forget that he led you through the great & terrifying wilderness with its poisonous snakes & scorpions, where it was so hot & dry. He gave you water from the rock! He fed you with manna in the wilderness, a food unknown to your ancestors. He did this to humble you & test you for your own good. He did all this so you would never say to yourself, 'I have achieved this wealth with my own strength & energy.' Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath. If you ever forget the Lord your God & follow other gods, worshiping & bowing down to them, you will certainly be destroyed." – Dt 8:10-19

It is always that way...When it's summertime & the living's easy...Our focus, devotion, allegiance, attention, dedication & worship...our hearts tend toward all manner of distraction & destruction...& it is a matter of life/death. Again Moses: *"Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life & death; prosperity & disaster. I command you this day love the Lord your God & keep his commands, decrees, & regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live & flourish, & the Lord your God will bless you & the land you are about to enter & occupy. But if your heart turns away & you refuse to listen, & if you are drawn away to serve & worship other gods, then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy. Today I have given you the choice between life & death; blessings & curses. Now I call on heaven & earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you & your descendants might live!"* – Dt 30:15-19

Over & over...God's word is clear. There is only one viable way forward into the abundant flourishing life God offers... profound gratitude lived in a responsive obedient relationship to the Father for his unmerited graciousness that opens the way ^b/₄ us, watches over us, journeys beside us, & pursues us every single step of our lives & in his Son Jesus dies the death we owed for sin we could not erase *You were dead because of your sins & because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us & took it away by nailing it to the cross.* – Col 2:13-14...to respond to that grace by surrendering yielding offering all we are in loving obedience to this gracious, terrifying God who calls us into passionate, lifelong service ^w/ _{all our hearts, minds, souls & strength.}

We know...every family has some kind of legacy/imprint it seeks to establish/pass on Every. Family. We all want our names, our lives, & our families to mean more than just an address on the letterbox...footnote in the family album. What becomes unavoidably true is that who God is & what God has done for us determines who we are called to be. So **OUR** call...like the one Joshua issues to the people of Israel, is

to declare in our hearts, homes & lives that legacy...imprint...purpose. Who will we trust to establish us as an outpost of God's Kingdom for generations to come? Who will we trust to build & secure our legacy into the future? **So** fear the Lord & serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River & in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? Who **WILL YOU** serve? How we answer that question sets the course for any functionality in our families & beyond because **WE** affirm with Joshua: **But** as for me & my family, we will serve the Lord. It's there that we discard dysfunction & receive the only lasting legacy: fullness of life only God in Jesus offers...

TAKE IT HOME – As you leave today...be specific & share with your neighbour...

Thinking back to our little starter "game" --- **WHAT WOULD THE NEIGHBOURS SAY?**

If I were to ask, "What really sets _____ apart from anyone else on the street?"

What would you like them to say?

How will you go about making that happen?

Let's pray with that in mind...

Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.

Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them.

Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously. -- Is 55:6-7

Father we turn to you...to your word trusting your promises of mercy & life in your presence forever. Give us only you...for in you all our strivings find satisfaction & our needs are met...for the sake of giving witness to your greatness goodness & love...in Jesus' name...Amen