
Yes, We Will

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 25 August 2024

Joshua 24:14-22 • Ephesians 6:10-20 • John 6:56,60-69



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

You remember the words of the old song:

When Israel was in Egypt land —
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand —
Let my people go!

Go down, Moses, way down to Egypt land!
Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go!

In today's reading from Joshua, we find Joshua speaking to his people, the Israelites. Joshua inherited the mantle of leadership from Moses, who was permitted by God to look on the Promised Land, but not to enter it. Calling a great assembly of the people, Joshua recounts to them what happened in that long, 40-year exodus from Egypt. God brought his people out of slavery into a

Holy Land. But the people were not always willing to acknowledge God as their Lord. They constantly went off after other gods, the gods of the peoples through whose land they travelled.

Now that they have entered the Promised Land and are settling down after the wars they fought with the other peoples, Joshua speaks to them about God. He reminds them what God has done for them, and he gives them a choice: follow God or follow those other gods. You can't have it both ways. Can you commit yourselves to worship the one true God?

This is the same question that every Christian must eventually ask himself. We are not so much at risk of worshipping other gods, although some say that wealth and power are gods which people can and do worship. But can we put God first in our lives?

And that, really, is the one big question the Bible asks us all the way through. Can we put God first? The Ten Commandments begin with, "You shall have no other gods before me." The Jewish shema begins with, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind." Jesus challenged his disciples to leave all their regular occupations and follow him.

The people answer Joshua with a resounding "Yes!", but he is skeptical. He makes them repeat it. He warns them what will happen if they fall away — disaster. But they again affirm their faith in the one true God.

It is no surprise that the Exodus from Egypt is the central event in the Jewish faith, and of great importance for Christians, for it showed the challenge that God made to his people: will you stay faithful to me, even through this long and difficult journey? Forty years is a long time — a lifetime for some people.

And for us today: will we persevere throughout our life's journey, a journey, perhaps, of 70 or 80 or 90 years, or more? Will we remain faithful?

To which we pray that we may answer: "Yes we will — with God's help!"

Amen.