

Decide

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Joshua 24:15 Revelations 3:16

The challenge before us today is, "Decide today which God you will serve." There is a constant contrast in our lives between one true God and many false gods. When we think of false gods, this has little meaning for us if we think of outlandish deities, stone idols or pagan religions which would not attract us at all. But anything that commands our love and loyalty to the exclusion of all else can be a false god. Pleasure, money, power, success, possessions, excessive TV and material wealth are often the names of our gods.

"Decide today whom you will serve." So many seem to chose the middle of the road as the safe journey. Not too far this way, not too far that way and I can't go wrong. This is precisely the decision Jesus was warning us about. The middle of the road is no decision at all. Scripture even warns us, "You are neither hot nor cold; would *that* you were hot or cold. Because you are neither hot nor cold, I spew you out of my mouth." I may not be that good, but I'm really not *that* bad. Neutralism seems to be an abomination. Middle of the road is unacceptable. True love does not straddle the middle of the road; it is fully committed to what it loves.

Jesus is fully committed to us. There is no middle of the road in His love for us. He shed His last drop of blood for us. Imagine; the totality of His love. This is the covenant He made with us when we were baptized. This forms us into God's people. True love can not be forced; it must be committed to. It must be devoted to. It must be a free choice devotion freely extended to the object of our affection. There is no room for middle of the road.

Jesus extends the freedom of choice to His apostles, to His followers and even to us today. This is difficult and some followers left. Will you also leave? We are given a choice; we are free to

accept or decline God's offer. If we accept, then we enter into a sacred covenant with God. A covenant is a love relationship that has duties, responsibilities, obligations and even consequences. The consequences are great, for there is no greater opponent than a lover who is scorned. If we accept the covenant, then the words and teachings of Jesus become the rule and obligation of our relationship With Him and with one another. Then His words become the food and life for our souls.

"Whom will you serve" also implies "How will you serve?" How do we go about responding to that? The Covenant is to shape us into God's people bonded together by this relationship. Scripture invites us to examine the basic priorities and choices by which we live. In our fast-paced culture, the complexities and number of decisions we face today can sometimes leave us emotionally overwhelmed. The result can be an experience of "psychic Jet-lag" - a feeling that we can never quite catch up to ourselves or to the frantic flow of life that surrounds us. Our minds become desperate, our energy drained. Our vision blurred, our priorities jumbled, and our values flattened out by the sheer need to survive.

In such a spiritual wasteland, it is easy to lose touch with what really matters; easy to miss the moments of grace. We are challenged to stop and smell the roses, or at least to slow down long enough to reflect on the question of what gods we, in reality, do serve. It is not a question of 'who am I?', but more importantly, 'whose am I?'; who has claim on my life? To what purpose have I given my attention and devotion? To whom have I given over the energy of my life? Joshua made a decision under the same kind of pressure: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." This is the same leap of trust that Peter made when he responded to Jesus' question: "Lord to whom shall we go? Only You have the words of eternal life!"

Christianity is not merely a philosophy but a personal relationship which opens up the inexhaustible recourses of God. Christianity is a binding covenant. To break the covenant is to leave Christ out of our lives, or to keep Him at a distance by traveling the

middle of the road. The consequence is frightening.

Question one: where will we go for the idea of truth? Question two: what will we do with our sins? Question three: what will we do in the face of death? Question four: for life to continue beyond the grave, what quality do we want it to have? We must answer these questions now so we can alter and transform our lives. Too often we measure our goodness by the things we don't do, rather than by what we should do. Our discipleship must be renewed constantly as we are called constantly to make choices. Life is not a dress rehearsal for heaven; it is the final performance for heaven for which we will receive applause from the angels.

This critical evaluation may dissuade some from continuing the journey with Jesus because we want things our way. God should accommodate us; after all, we know what's best in our lives. Look how successful I am doing it my way. When our world collapses then we cry: "God, why did YOU let this happen!" How fickle we are when we walk the middle of the road. I recently saw a T-shirt on a man that read, "I have abandoned my search for truth; now I'm looking for a good fantasy." On the back it read, "Don't follow me—I'm lost." Let us not follow fantasies, only truth. Decide today whom you will serve. There may not be a tomorrow!