

“WE BEGINS WITH ME”

Joshua 24:14-15

Introduction:

How many people here tonight moved to the Springs to attend Nazarene Bible College?

Wish I could have been there when your were making that decision. Would have been interesting to have been in on the process.

I have a hunch that for some the process went smoothly. God called you to serve Him as a minister of the gospel, and that call included moving to Colorado Springs to enroll at NBC. You said, “Yes!” Told your family, “We’re moving to Colorado.” Your family said, “Yea!” You packed up your belongings and headed this way.

But I also have a hunch that the process didn’t go that smoothly for others. God called you to serve Him, and that call included moving to Colorado Springs to enroll at NBC.

You said, “Yes!” Told your family, “We’re moving to Colorado.” Your family said, “What do you mean ‘we’?”

Transition:

It’s the kind of question that Joshua must have heard all the time. “What do you mean ‘we’?” Let’s think about his life for minute.

I. Joshua’s Story

Here’s a guy who came home one day to tell his family that they were moving. They were going to follow a former shepherd by the name Moses out into the desert, and then head toward the Promise Land. I can hear his family asking him, “What do you mean ‘we’? We’re going where?” But Joshua replied, “We begins with me – Moses knows where he’s going, and we’re going with him.” So off to the desert they went.

While Joshua was in the desert, we was chosen to lead a battle against the Amalekites, one the tough tribes in the region. So, he went to army and told them his plans. I can

imagine his army talking among themselves saying, “What do you mean ‘we’? We’re going to fight whom?” Joshua’s response? “We begins with me – we can take these guys.” So off to the battle they went, and the Israelites were victorious.

Later on, Joshua was one of a group of spies who explored the Promised Land. They found it to be flowing with milk and honey and giant grapes and the giants who eat those grapes. So, when the group filed their report, Joshua and Caleb thought Israel should enter Canaan. The rest of the spies’ response was, “What do you mean ‘we’? Didn’t you see those giants?” Joshua replied, “We begins with me. I’ll go.” But no one would join him. So Israel spent forty years in the wilderness instead entering the Promise Land.

“What do you mean ‘we’?” It’s the kind of question Joshua must have heard all of his life.

A generation later, Israel arrives on the edge of God’s plan for them. Moses is gone and buried. Joshua is now the

leader of Israel, and all they have to do is cross the Jordan River to get into the Promise Land. So, Joshua announced to the people, “We’re going to cross the Jordan here.” And the people said to themselves, “What do you mean ‘we’? There’s no bridge and we don’t see any boats.” So, Joshua said again, “We begins with me. We’re headed to the other side.” The people followed, the waters parted, and Israel was finally in Canaan.

However, standing in their way of settling the land was the city of Jericho. Quaint little place with double walls 15 feet apart – one wall 6’ wide and the other wall 12’ wide - surrounding 7 acres of land. (Halley, 161) Joshua said, “We’re going to take the town down.” The people had to be thinking, “What do you mean ‘we’? What’s your plan of attack?” Joshua declared, “We begins with me. We’re going to march around the city for six days straight. Then on the seventh day, we’re going to march around it seven times, blow the rams’ horns, then shout aloud, and then Jericho will

fall.” So, they marched and marched and blew the horns and shouted, and “. . . the walls come a tumbling’ down.”

Later there was a battle at Ai, another battle at Gilgal, the sun stood still at Gibeon, and then finally Promised Land parceled out to the members of Israel’s twelve tribes. Not an easy move in the bunch. But every time the people said, “What do you me ‘we’? Joshua said, “We begins with me – let’s roll.” They did. Israel prevailed. And they began to settle the land.

Transition:

That brings us to our text in Joshua 24.

II. Joshua’s Legacy

Joshua is now at the end of his life - 110 years old, and still the leader of Israel. He calls the people together reminding them of all God has done for them and of all He has in store for them in the future. And then he says to them:

"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." (Joshua 24:14-15 NIV)

[As an aside] Interesting, isn't it, that after all the Israelites had been through, after all the progress they'd made, after all the things that God had done for them, some still had idols with them. Some were still carrying about wooden totems and stone statues, just in case they needed them, instead of putting their complete trust in God.

And did you hear that refrain again? "We begins with me." What Joshua calls the people to do, he'll do first. He calls the people to honesty, to commitment, to singleness of heart (Madvig, 368), and he'll lead the way. "We begins with me. Do want you want, choose whom you'll choose. But

me, my family, my household are moving in God's direction, we're following His lead – we will serve the LORD.”

One writer put it this way:

Joshua . . . He chose, and he chose, and he chose, and he kept right on choosing . . . Thus his word to the people was not an affirmation puffed up on the spur of the moment. It was deeply imbedded in Joshua's comprehension of what it required of a person made in the image of God, one called upon not to obey God like a machine or an animal, but to obey God by choice. (Schaeffer, 208)

Transition:

Joshua – what a great model, what a great example.

We can learn a lot from the choices he made, from the way he lived his life. We can see our lives' challenges and battles mirrored in his. We can follow his lead and take up his legacy. However, that kind of analogy is not the point of passage, that's not the theme of the book. When we read Joshua's story and see Joshua's legacy, we are not supposed to be asking ourselves, “What would Joshua do?”

We are invited to declare in amazement, “Look at what God did!”

III. God’s Doing

God is the one who called Joshua, who lead Joshua, who said to Joshua on more than one occasion,

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)

God is the focus of these stories. Joshua is just the example of what happens to a person who puts their trust in God. As one commentator put it:

[The Book of] Joshua is not so much a tribute to such matters as military skill or human enthusiasm as it is to the mighty acts of God Himself . . . While Joshua was rightly celebrated for his leadership and general powers of coordination, the narrative makes it clear that, in the light of the Covenant provisions, the true glory must be given to God alone.” (Harrison, 678)

Actually, Joshua provides a quick review of God’s “doings” at the beginning of chapter 24. Let’s do a little question and answer here.

- Who father Abraham from beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan?
- Who gave him Isaac, and gave Isaac Esau and Jacob?
- Who sent Moses and Aaron, afflicted the Egyptians and brought Israel out of Egypt?
- Who parted the waters of the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptian army?
- Who gave the Amorites into Israel's hands?
- Who led Israel into Jordan?
- Who made the walls of Jericho fall?

And God concludes by saying, 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. (24:2-13)

It's then that Joshua offers the people a choice: "Choose whom you'll serve. But we begins with me and we're going to serve the LORD."

To paraphrase a writer, "The claims of [God] are so supreme and unquestionable that to be neutral is to be hostile." (Robert Hall by Mulder, 96)

Transition:

It's obvious that the option Joshua put to his people that day applies to us. How we will respond to God? Will we

say, “What do you mean ‘we’?” Or will we say, “We begins with me. As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”?

Conclusion:

I don't know how you came to the decision to accept God's call into ministry. I don't know what the process was like for you to get everyone else on board with idea of attending NBC. I don't know how many times someone said to you, “What do you mean ‘we’?” before you moved to the Springs. But your presence here is evidence you came to the place in your life where you said, “We begins with me. I will serve the LORD and I want my family, my household to serve Him, too.”

However, let me remind you it's not the last time you'll have to make that choice. Remember, Joshua says, “We **will** serve the LORD.” He was looking ahead, toward the future, knowing full well that as long as he lived he would

have to say, "We begins with me." to whatever came his way.

At the end of chapter 24, there's a dialogue between Joshua and the people regarding their response to God. I want us to use their words as our own.

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. 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."

But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

"Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him." (Joshua 24:19-24)

Now, let's seal the deal. [Sing "I Give You My Heart"]