

## Jesus our Joshua (11)

**The Past lives in the Future.** Joshua 24:1-15. Judges 2:6-15.

**“Choose this day whom you will serve.”** ---Josh.24:14

**“If any want to become my followers let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”** --- Matt 16:24. NRSV

Grandma has the family on the edge of their seats. She is retelling an exciting story that took place when she was a teenager. After all the drama and hair-raising details, she pauses and says, “Now then, ----” .... and you know the moral of the story is about to come next. Stories and lessons from the past can help us understand how best to live in the present. The historiography, the central story of the people of God should teach the church today how God constantly chastens his people and operates through repeated cycles of **judgement and renewal**.

As Joshua recounts God’s wonderful deeds—beginning with Abraham and moving on to the time Israel entered the land of Canaan, God was at work preparing Israel for the task of their encountering the present. Joshua tells the story in the first person-singular, as if God himself was speaking. We hear God reminding us of his gracious deeds and when we hear the words, “*Now therefore-----*” v14) ---- we know we are at a **‘crisis teaching moment.’** Joshua’s rehearsal of God’s mighty deeds served to motivate the people to be loyal to God, to praise him for who he is, for his faithfulness, mercy, and grace. Today as never before we need to reflect on the biblical story and of *Jesus as our Joshua*. As part of the passing parade of God’s people we need to know what it means to recount and soak ourselves in the unfolding wonder of God’s glory and grace.

Jesus understood human weakness and the treachery of our hearts so well that he deliberately instituted the Lord’s Supper. In providing a memorial meal Jesus said, **“Do this in remembrance of me.”** (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor.11:24-25, Acts2:42) This celebration is more than a bare recalling of a past event in the same way that we recall a birthday or anniversary. In accepting the bread and wine, we claim that what Jesus did in the past actually makes a difference; that it actually impacts the present moment.

In other words, this remembrance is not a bare remembrance; just a religious practise or a dead ritual, it is a living, dynamic, **‘now-moment’** in that it impacts us now. Its truth actually makes a difference to how we understand life now. It envelops God’s love, and our relationship with him now!!!

Charles Spurgeon in a sermon on the Lord’s Supper urged his people to **“feast on Him”**. This spiritual reality is also expressed in the formula, to **“feed on Him in your hearts by faith.”** Jesus real presence is not in the bread and wine but in our trust and believing use of the elements.

Take time to think about and express what it means to be part of the passing parade of God’s people now!

The book of Acts also includes some similar dynamic account of God acting in time and history. In all of these accounts the audience has a “now-moment”. God has already acted in a way that has been faithfully documented and the testimony preserved. The question now is, ---how will we respond? It was the same question that Israel faced as Jesus stood in Pilate’s hall. It is not possible to remain neutral. What will we do with Jesus? Some reject Christ (Acts 7:54) and others submit to Him. (Acts 13:48) Who is Jesus, God’s Joshua to you and me?

Like Israel, the church can be tainted, invaded, ravaged by surrounding foreign forces but **it can also be renewed, liberated**: not by getting busy with better methods or imaginative action plans, but by being **exposed to the life-giving action of God**.

*“The church has often been invaded by foreign forces, but it can also be liberated. This happens when the Church realises again that **it is the creation of the Holy Spirit, --- that it lives ‘by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ (Matt. 4:4), that the ‘Word of God is not fettered.’(2 Tim. 2:9)** the great process of liberation sets in and the church which had seemed to become a mere reflection of society-- **emerges in its true original character as the witness of the New Creation which, instead of conforming itself to the world, demands the transformation of the world.**” ‘The Renewal of the Church’, W.A. Visser T. Hooft 1955, p107. Are we then witnesses of the New Creation? (2 Cor. 5:17)*

**Discuss:**

(1) “What matters is that we are constantly brought back in touch with the centre of the faith that Jesus, **‘gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of God our father.’” (Gal: 1:4). -- “And because it is not really our movement but the movement of the Lord who unites his people, it will continue to move.” Rev Dr Frank Engel.**

(2) “Jesus frees us from the power of the “present evil age”, so that we can be part of **God’s new age, his new creation**, launched already when Jesus rose from the dead.--- --The vital work was already done. **We do not have to win that essential victory over again.** What we have to do is to respond to the love poured out on the cross with love of our own, with love for the one who died, yes, but also with love for those around us.” “The Day the Revolution Began,” N.T. Wright 2018, p365.

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