

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Trust, Obey, and Conquer: The Book of Joshua

Joshua 24:15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

"The Two Ways"

July 8, 2012

Sermon Text: Psalm 1

Scripture Reading:

Introduction-

We have looked at the first two chapters of Joshua. The Lord has confirmed Joshua as the new leader of Israel after Moses' death. He has made tremendous promises to Joshua, and to us:

Joshua 1:6-9 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. (7) Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. (8) This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (9) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

And that is exactly what happened. The spies experienced success as Rahab took them in and hid them. We saw in Rahab an example of true, saving faith as she confessed the God of Israel to be the true God of all the universe. And we saw that her deliverance was a kind of second Passover, her house even being marked by a red cord which was obviously symbolic of the blood of the Passover lamb and thus of salvation in Christ.

This good success and courage will continue in chapters 3 and 4 as the Lord gives His people another Red Sea crossing in taking them across the swollen Jordan River by stopping the waters.

But before we proceed, I wanted to spend this morning taking a look at another Scripture that could have been written by Joshua himself, though it was actually written probably 200 years after his time. It is the very first Psalm. Listen to it as I read and you will see what I mean about it being parallel to the promises given to Joshua:

Psalms 1:1-6 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; (2) but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

(3) He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (4) The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. (5) Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; (6) for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Moment by moment in this present life we face forks in the road. And really, fundamentally, it is always a fork – a choice between two ways. It may seem at times that we have many choices with multiple roads ahead of us. But really, it is always a fork. It is always this way or that way. The two ways. And that is our subject this morning.

You can trace the two ways from Genesis to Revelation.

- The way of obedience to the Lord's command in Eden; or the serpent's way
- The way of Cain or the way of Abel
- The way of Noah or the way of the world
- The way of Abraham or the way of Sodom

And on and on until we come to the way of Christ or the way of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The two ways.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

They are before us every day. And we see them very clearly here in the very first Psalm. Let's take a closer look.

A. Walk, Stand, Sit vss 1-2

This Psalm is God's prescription for leading a prosperous, fruitful life. There really is such a thing as a "prosperity gospel" but it has nothing to do with money and comfort and certain good health – at least directly. It is a prescription for success because it is God's prescription for LIFE.

And so the Psalm opens with a benediction – a blessing. Blessed. Blessed is the man who.... What person in their right mind does not want God's blessing on their life? Well, the fact is that many – most – people are not in their right mind

because the light of their mind has been darkened and they are blinded by sin. So they reject God's offer of blessing.

Many times we speak blessing to one another. We bless things, and really what we mean is "may God bless you, or this, or that." Nothing is better than being blessed by God. To be blessed means that God actively prospers our lives and gives us good things. He empowers our efforts so they are fruitful. He gives us peace and health. To be blessed by God is the opposite of being cursed by God. It is life rather than death. Think of the opposite of these things and you will have an idea of what being blessed by God means:

Deuteronomy 28:58-68 "If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, (59) then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. (60) And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. (61) Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed. (62) Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you

shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God. (63) And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (64) "And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. (65) And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. (66) Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. (67) In the morning you shall say, 'If only it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'If only it were morning!' because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see. (68) And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer."

Does anyone want that? No, but these are the very things people reap when God is against us (curse) rather than for us (blessing).

This Psalm tells us how to be blessed by God, and it begins with 3 negatives. What NOT to do if we would be people who are this "blessed man" the Psalmist speaks of:

- Don't walk in the counsel of the wicked
- Don't stand in the way of sinners
- Don't sit in the seat of scoffers

Walk, stand, sit. The progression is purposeful. It moves from a listening to the wicked, to a pausing to listen more intently, and ends in a full participation with evil. This progression cannot be avoided. Once we begin to listen to evil counsel, we will soon be standing with them in the way they are going, and in the end we will be fully characterized by their values and mindset and actions. We will be sitting with them as one of them.

Here is the evil way of the two ways. It is the way of the wicked, of sinners, of scoffers. Those who pause at the fork too long will end up choosing it.

"When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely walk in the counsel of the careless and

ungodly, who forget God – the evil is rather practical than habitual – but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they stand in the way of open sinners who willfully violate God’s commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they sit in the seat of the scornful. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation they are installed. But the blessed man, the man to whom all the blessings of God belong, can hold no communion with such characters as these...and goes out of the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ.” [Spurgeon]

The man who is blessed by the Lord does not choose that way. He does not linger at it. He does not listen to evil counsel, he does not stand with sinners, he does not sit down with scoffers. He chooses the right and good way—

BUT...his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.

In contrast to evil counsel, to the way and the scoffing of the wicked, the man who is blessed by the Lord loves the Word of the Lord. He walks in its counsel, he stands in the way of those who also love it, and he sits in the seat of the saints.

What is it then to love the law of God? It is to be in full agreement with God’s Word. It is to give oneself to that Word diligently to know it and to do it. It is to teach others that Word, just as Ezra resolved to do—

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

-- and to exhort them to follow that same way.

NOTE: I want each of us then to get a firm grasp on a very vital point set out for us here. It is this:

The Law of the Lord is the great divider of men. It is this Word of God that creates the fork in the road and thus the two ways. The reason that the man blessed by God does not walk stand, or sit with the evil is precisely BECAUSE he delights in the Word of God and gives himself to it day and night so that he is careful to do everything according to the Word. The counsel, way, and seat of the wicked despises God’s Word and opposes it at every point. Thus, our response and attitude to the Word of God will determine which of the two Ways we take, and whether we are going to be blessed or cursed by God.

In other words, the way of God's blessing is *trust and obey*. Believe God's Word and Obey God's Word. And that is the very theme we have identified for the book of Joshua – *Trust, Obey, and Conquer*.

Spurgeon puts it this way - *“The blessed man's footsteps are ordered by the Word of God and not by the cunning and wicked devices of carnal men.... His company is of a choicer sort than it was... he dares not herd with the multitude that do evil. Let others make a mock of sin, of eternity, of hell and heaven, and of the Eternal God; this man has learned better philosophy than that of the infidel, and has too much sense of God's presence to endure to hear His name blasphemed. The seat of the scorner may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell; let us flee from it, for it shall soon be empty, and destruction shall swallow up the man who sits therein.”* [Treasury of David]

As God's Word was to Joshua, so it is here. If you would be blessed by God, if you would be a person whose way is prospered by the Lord, then you must set yourself to study and do God's Word. You must love His precepts and know His will by knowing His Word. “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do

according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” [Josh 1:8]

Trees, Chaff, and Judgment 3-6

Now look at the next section of this Psalm where we see the blessing of the believing, obedient man contrasted with the curse of the wicked:

Psalms 1:3-4 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (4) The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

And then:

Psalms 1:5-6 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; (6) for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Perhaps the Psalmist was sitting somewhere as he penned this, looking at a tree growing beside a stream, well-watered, green, and fruitful. Did a wind come up then and blow dust and dry chaff away? Whatever the setting, these are the images the Psalmist uses.

In the tree we see:

- Stability
- Life
- Fruitfulness

And in contrast the chaff:

- Instability
- Death
- Valuelessness

In particular, these qualities are evident in what the Psalmist calls - *the judgment*. The Two Ways have far different outcomes. The way of the blessed man ends in the congregation or assembly of the righteous, while the way of the wicked ends in eternal destruction in hell. Let's listen to some of Spurgeon's comments again:

“And he shall be like a tree planted – not a wild tree, but a tree planted, chosen, considered as property, cultivated and secured from that last terrible uprooting:

Matthew 15:13 He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.

Planted by rivers of water so that even if one river should fail, he has another..... The man who delights in God's Word, being taught by it, brings forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial, and holy joy in the hour of prosperity.... To the eye of faith this word is sure, and by it we

perceive that our works are prospered, even when everything seems to go against us. It is not outward prosperity which the Christian most desires and values; it is soul prosperity which he longs for.... Our worst things are often our best things. AS there is a curse wrapped up in the wicked man's mercies, so there is a blessing concealed in the righteous man's crosses, losses, and sorrows. The trials of the Christian are a divine husbandry, by which he grows and brings forth abundant fruit.”

“Here is the character of the wicked – they are like chaff, intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away. Here also, mark their doom – the wind drives away; death shall hurry them with its terrible blast into the fire in which they shall be utterly consumed. They shall stand there to be judged, but not to be acquitted. Fear shall lay hold upon them there; they shall not stand their ground; they shall flee away.... Well may the Christian long for heaven, for no evil men shall dwell there, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. All of our congregations on earth are mixed. Every church has one devil in it. The tares grow in the same furrows as the wheat. There is no floor which is as yet thoroughly purged from chaff. Sinners mix with saints [in disguise] as dross mingles with gold. Let us rejoice

then that in the general assembly and church of the firstborn above there shall by no means be admitted a single unrenewed soul. Sinners cannot live in heaven. They would be out of their element. Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise. Heaven would be an intolerable hell to an impenitent man, even if he could be allowed to enter; but such a privilege shall never be granted to the man who perseveres in his iniquities.”

Chaff That is No More

I would like to provide you with some real-life, sobering examples of chaff that has already blown away, stored up right now in Hades to be cast into the lake of fire in the final judgment. This chaff has names. It has faces. This chaff is people. It is the wicked.

As I grew up in my childhood, I spent much of my time at the houses of my many aunts and uncles . There were 9 brothers and sisters on the paternal side of my extended family. To my knowledge, with perhaps one exception, all of them chose to be chaff. In fact, numbers of them were actually known to be avowed haters of Christ. It was a grievous error that my parents chose to walk, stand, and perhaps even ultimately *sit* with them rather than seeking God’s blessing by delighting in His Word and departing from the company of the wicked, the

sinners, and the scoffers. The evil effects of keeping that wicked company continue even to this day. If we would be blessed by God, then no matter who the wicked may be, no matter how closely we may be related to them in this earthly life, we must depart from them, else we will surely join them. *Walk, stand, sit.* It is folly to think that anyone can evade that diabolical progression into evil.

Now, regarding the frightful brevity of chaff.

I can see my aunt and uncle’s place in my mind. I can hear the sounds, I can smell the smells. It was one of my favorite places as a kid. There is the old white house with the concord grapevine growing on the front porch; the hip-roofed barn with a big bin for oats to feed Shorty the horse, and the hayloft up above on the second story. My uncle’s old machine shop stood across from the house and there were always old rusted vehicles and parts sitting around it. There was a pond in the pasture to the east of the house, and Rock Creek ran through the place where I spent many, many hours fishing for native cutthroat. And then there was the orchard on a hill behind the house where you could sit and wait for a buck to come in at dusk in hunting season. There were trips up into the mountains to fish the Luckiamute River. Wild rides up

muddy, rutted trails in an old “Jeep” my uncle built; my aunt’s garden, and my aunt’s kitchen. We called the place “Bald Mountain” and we were always ready to go.

But my aunt and uncle were chaff. They scoffed at Christ. I knew this when I presided over and preached at their funerals.

They are gone. They are like chaff that the wind drives away. All of what seemed so permanent has long since departed. That old familiar house is gone. The orchard is gone. The shop is gone. And if I were to stop in there today and talk to the people who own it and live in a new house, they would not even know who my aunt and uncle were.

Where did they go? I can see their faces and hear their voices. Where are they? They were chaff, and the wind has driven them away. In a moment, they were gone. There is no good fruit from their lives. Not only have they perished, ready only to be resurrected in a moment and cast into hell forever, but *the very way of their earthly path is gone*. You can find no enduring marks that they ever lived.

Such is the end which every wicked man, every sinner, every scoffer surely comes to because they choose the

wicked way instead of the way of the righteous.

Let me describe some more chaff for you:

I like to ride my motorcycle out through Perrydale sometimes. You may not have ever heard of it – largely it is just a crossroads. There is a school, a church, and a few houses. It is all farmland lying on a side road between Amity and Dallas. I was also very familiar with Perrydale when I was growing up because several of my aunts and uncles lived there, along with my paternal grandfather. All of them were chaff. All of them scorned Christ.

I can see one small white house just west of Pete Brown’s old farm equipment shop (which is in disrepair and overgrown with blackberries). The last time I rode by it, the yard was filled with strangers. The house looks pretty much the same and the little orchard there behind the house remains. But the faces and people I knew are gone. I realized as I looked at the people who now live there, that none of them probably would even know my aunt and uncle’s name nor would they have any idea of all the years of events and family gatherings that I remember took place there.

Where are my aunt and uncle? What has become of them and their lives? Where is the way they traveled? Are there any remnants of it? The answer is, like chaff driven away by the wind and ready to be consumed by the fire of God's judgment, they have perished. They will not stand in the assembly of the righteous. They will never see the New Heavens and the New Earth nor eternal life. And I will never see them again. Their way was that of the wicked, and they have perished in it.

Then, if you turn to the north and drive just a couple of miles on a gravel road, you come to another farm that was owned by still another of my aunts and uncles. I worked many, many hours and summers on this farm. And as you look at it, the same old story comes into play. The huge old wooden barn is gone. The milkhouse is gone. The farmhouse itself is in disrepair and probably will be torn down before long. There are the fencerows where my father and I hunted pheasants, and the old garden site, and the washroom where we cleaned up when we came in from the fields to eat huge meals every single day. I can see it, I can see and hear them, I can smell it.

But like chaff, they are gone. What seemed so permanent, wasn't permanent at all, and when I preached

at this uncle's funeral, there was no good news to share about his soul.

Do you begin to see it? Chaff. Isn't it ironic that on this particular farm I can remember combining wheat and oats and barley, and all the while there were the very images that Psalm 1 is talking about, right there to warn everyone seeing them about the Two Ways! Wheat was put into the truck and sold to the mill. The chaff was blown away by the fans on the combine and ultimately burned up when the fields were burned.

All of these people, and I could go on to tell you more. In Independence, just outside of Salem, I could show you the remnants of what was still another very familiar place in my childhood where another aunt and uncle lived. There was a pond where I caught bass, trees to climb, a large house where we had many, many family reunions and 4th of July get-togethers. But with perhaps the exception of this aunt, it is all gone. Chaff. No one on that street would ever remember my aunt and uncle or any of the things that were so familiar to me.

They have perished. Their way has perished. They did not delight in the Word of God. They listened to the counsel of the wicked, they stood in the way of sinners, and they ultimately sat down in the ranks of scoffers, and

they have perished. Only that great and terrible day awaits them. They will never see the glories that Christ has won for us. Such is the fleeting nature and destiny of chaff.

Conclusion

And so the obvious question must be put to us this morning – which of the Two Ways are you on? Do not go wrong here, or you go wrong for all eternity. Just because you are here sitting in this church on a Sunday morning, do not be so naïve as to think that it is impossible to be traveling the Way of the Wicked. Ask yourself these questions soberly and with ruthless honesty:

- Where do you get your counsel? That is to say, where do you take your philosophy for living from? On what do you base the decisions that you make? If it is not proceeding from a diligent search and delighting knowledge of the Word of God, then you are walking in the counsel of the wicked. I have to say that increasingly I am seeing and hearing people who profess to be Christians saying and doing things that are absolutely contrary to Scripture. And when I correct them, they reject what God's Word says.

- What direction do you see your life taking? What is the tendency of your thinking and practice? Remember, if you walk in the counsel of the wicked, you will surely progress to standing and ultimately sitting. Are you tending toward evidence of a renewed mind, or are you tending toward the world's mindset?
- What is the company you stand among? Standing in the way of sinners is to linger in the company of the wicked, and it will draw you off of the right Way. You cannot choose sinners for your comrades and be unscathed. Many people profess to belong to Christ, yet they forsake the assembling together of God's people with regularity because they would really rather stand in the way and company of sinners.
- What do you think of the scoffing with which arrogant, wicked people mock Christ? Do you ever speak out against it? Or, and I hope no one here this morning is of this category, do you participate in it? Once a person walks, stands, and then sits in the company of the wicked, he will not longer walk, stand, and sit in the company of God's people.

As I have illustrated – clearly and soberly I hope – the very memory of the wicked will perish. They will spend their eternity in torment in hell, cast out of the presence and blessing of God whom they despised, while in the assembly of the righteous they will never be even named again. Such is the end of chaff.

Not so the man blessed by the Lord.

Would you be like that blessed tree? Do you want to stand in the judgment and join the congregation of the righteous? Do you want your life to be worth something at the end of the road? Then mark this down well—

“but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

Do you? Are your steps really being directed by the Word of God because you feed on it continually? Are you truly obeying it? Is your mind consumed by its truth? That is the way, and the only way, to be this man of Psalm 1 who is blessed by the Lord. And such men and women, it seems to me, are growing increasingly rare in our day. Take care. Lest you become chaff and join the wicked in the day they perish.