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## *Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve*

**A sermon by the Very Rev. Sam Candler  
Proper 27 – Year A**

The successor to Moses was Joshua, the leader of the Hebrews, the tribe of Israel. The people had wandered, had wandered, in the wilderness for forty years. As they were about to enter, finally, the promised land, Joshua addressed the people with these now famous words:

*Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region 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).*

Choose this day whom you will serve. ...As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.

Take a breath.

Be here at Church for a few moments.

Be Church for a few moments.

I know this has been a tense week, excruciating for some, maybe exhilarating for some. Maybe both excruciating and exhilarating. This has been election week in the United States of America, and the attention of our country has especially been focused here, upon the state of Georgia. Wow.

As you know, I am recording this sermon before the Sunday on which you hear it. I am recording these words on Friday, November 6, before our country knows our final official election results. So be it. Of course, we might not know final results on Sunday either!

But my words are the same in any case, no matter whether we have final results, and no matter who is being declared victorious in our various political contests.

This has been a tense week, an anxious season, a weary year, a worrisome wandering in the wilderness. Some of us have fared reasonably well in this wilderness. We have made do. Others of us have not fared well in the wilderness. We got mired in impatience, and then frustration, and then anger, even lashing out at our closest colleagues and companions, and leaders. Griping just like the early Hebrews wandering in the wilderness.

To all of us, I repeat these words. Take a breath. Catch your breath! Be at Church for a few minutes. Be the Church! Be the Church for a while. Be the people of God.

Let some peace enter your hearts. Let that peace sink into your heart, and then let it rest even deeper, down into that soul part of you; let the peace of God grow deeply in that part of you that needs rest.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-30).

Come to me all you who are weary, and I will give you rest. I know that the tension and anxiety of this election season has been tremendous upon you. I have felt it, too. Some of that energy is good! It is right and good that we citizens take part in our democratic process. I hope that every person listening to me this morning found a way to vote in the past several weeks! Participation in government is a good thing, a necessary part of our healthy lives.

In my bible studies this week, on the Tuesday and Wednesday of our election week, I asked an opening question. The subject of this week was First Corinthians, chapter 8, and false gods. Great conversation about false gods. My opening question, during election week, was this: Can politics be a false god? Around the table, around the screen, were both democrats and republicans, but almost everyone answered some form of Yes – no matter who they voted for.

Yes, we all know that participation in politics is a good and necessary thing. But even good things can turn into idols. That is one of the lessons throughout scripture. The people of God often become so enamored with things that once were good and made sense, that we lose touch with the one, and infinite, and mighty God, the one God who passes all understanding, the God who is above all our false gods.

Spiritually attentive people acknowledge that we have all served different gods, at some point or another. We have served the various gods of our fathers and mothers, just as the followers of Joshua had! We have served the various gods of our families and tribes. Another word for “tribes” might be all the labels that keep getting tossed and thrown around the political landscape these days!

But Joshua says, “Put them away.” Put away the gods of your ancestors. Let them go.

It is time to enter a new land, just as the followers of Joshua would. At one time, the tribes of Israel all had different gods, too! But Joshua says he will follow Yahweh. Joshua says, “choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region 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 24:15).

That is what we choose today. That is what we vote for.

We are Christian. No particular political party completely defines us! Not even the ones we give our hearts and money to! Giving our hearts and money is okay, for a time and for a season and for the common good.

But our deeper identity is something else. Our deeper allegiance, over and over again, is something else!

We gather today as Church, even if we are separated in social distance. We gather to choose what Joshua chose. We put away the other gods, even those that seemed good to us. We choose this day, we vote this day, to follow the one, holy, and infinite God, the one above all other gods, and above each of us. That God is Yahweh, the God whose name cannot be defined, but who represents justice and peace, mercy and love, in every generation. That God becomes flesh in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We gather on this Sunday, just like we do on any other Sunday, to remind ourselves of our ultimate allegiance. We serve Jesus. We follow Jesus, who said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

Take a breath. Let that peace of God, which passes all understanding, pervade deep within you.

Every Sunday, every day, no matter what political season we are in, gives us a chance to re-affirm that choice, our real vote. We follow Jesus, whose name, in Hebrew, is actually Joshua! The name, “Jesus” is Greek for “Joshua!” We follow Jesus and Joshua, the Joshua who said, “Choose this day—again and again—choose every day whom you will serve. As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

AMEN.

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