

August 19, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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**FEAR THE LORD AND SERVE HIM COMPLETELY
AND SINCERELY.**

CAST OUT THE GODS YOUR FATHERS SERVED.

By Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ

Today's First Reading

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, and addressed them, saying: "Fear the LORD and serve him completely and sincerely. Cast out the gods your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. If it does not please you to serve the LORD, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." But the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods. For it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among all the peoples through

whom we passed. At our approach the LORD drove out all the peoples, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God." Joshua in turn said to the people, "You may not be able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God who will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If, after the good he has done for you, you forsake the LORD and serve strange gods, he will do evil to you and destroy you." But the people answered Joshua, "We will still serve the LORD." Joshua therefore said to the people, "You are your own witnesses that you have chosen to serve the LORD." They replied, "We are, indeed!" Joshua continued: "Now, therefore, put away the strange gods that are among you and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." Then the people promised Joshua, "We will serve the LORD, our God, and obey his voice." So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem, which he recorded in the book of the law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was in the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people, "This stone shall be our witness, for it has heard all the words which the LORD spoke to us. It shall be a witness against you, should you wish to deny your God." Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his own heritage. After these events, Joshua, son of Nun, servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

JOSHUA 24:14-29

Reflection

This final chapter of the Book of Joshua reminds the Israelite people of Divine Goodness journeying with them from slavery to freedom, as well as their own response of faithfulness to the LORD. Notably this response is *always* their choice, rather than a demand. Within this passage the people declare more than once: "We will serve the LORD, our God . . ." They acknowledge their covenant, their connection with God, and God's connection with them, as they profess to serve the LORD completely and sincerely. While their leadership has changed from Moses to Joshua and their setting from Egypt/ the journey through the desert to the land of promise, the reality of covenant life remains for them.

"Serving the LORD" indicates a two-fold orientation:

1. Acceptance of the absolute sovereignty of God while "casting out the gods their fathers served."
 2. Service defined by acceptance of the Law pointing toward its mandated care for others (e.g., "the widow and the orphan").
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Camels in the desert
Photo by Taryn Elliott

For Pondering

- What does God's "absolute sovereignty" mean to you? How is it experienced in your living?
 - How does serving God express itself through serving others?
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For Prayer

*My God,
You and only You know
how strongly I want
to believe in You,
to put all my faith
in You alone.
Help me make this desire
a reality.
Help me perceive
Your Presence
and draw strength from it
every moment of my life.
Let that recognition bolster
my faith in You ---
wherever I go
whatever I do.*

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