

"It Began Long Ago"
September 23, 2018



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Joshua 24:1-13; Joshua 24:14-27; Matthew 14:22-33; Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20, Luke 5:1-116

DAY 1

Read Joshua 24:1-13

Why does Joshua gather all the people at Shechem? As you listen to his words, think about the importance of reiterating their history and the meaningful events of their journey.

- **Why is it important to remember events like this?**
- **What role does God play in this story of the gathering at Shechem?**

Think about our church, St. Paul. What are some of your fondest memories? Why are these events so important to you?

DAY 2

Read Joshua 24:14-27

Joshua makes it clear that the people have to choose whom they will follow. When you think about his decree, it makes sense. Jesus himself said we cannot serve two masters. Take a moment and review those things that are important in your life. In the grand scheme of your life, why are they so important? It's been said, "Think about the

one thing that means the most to you in life. If God said 'give it away' and you couldn't, then it owns you."

- **Reflect on those things you hold so near and dear to your heart that they just might be a false god to you.**
- **What does it mean to proclaim the words, "As for me and my household, we are going to serve the Lord"?**

In verses 19-25 the people are put to the test.

- **What signs are there in your life that you are placing God first?**
- **How willing are you to accept the same covenant Joshua drafted for the people, knowing if you waiver destruction will come?**

DAY 3

[Read Matthew 14:22-33](#)

- **What do you observe is happening in this story?**
- **Why do you feel Peter takes the initiative to reach out to Jesus when all the other disciples were afraid?**

In this story the boat represents safety. Too often, we make choices daily to take the safe route, even when we know it isn't the best path for the future. **Why?**

Because Peter stepped out of the boat, he was able to experience a miracle by walking on water.

- **How do you think this changed Peter's life as he looked into the future?**

DAY 4

Pastor Bob pointed out in Sunday's message that the church of the 21st century is much different than the church in prior centuries. No longer are people choosing to sit in buildings on Sunday mornings as they had in the past. At best, most people attend their local church once a month, and the days of seeing people walk through the doors of the church just because it's in their neighborhood are gone.

The two stories (Joshua and Peter) show us that a time comes when we, the church, must face certain truths; we must understand our current reality.

- **Take a moment and think through on your own how you have noted Christendom changing in your lifetime.**
- **Note the way(s) people saw the local church ten years ago versus today. What have you observed?**

We live in a culture that no longer sees the church as a building. In the past, people invested so much money into the physical building expecting it to represent the presence of the church in their community. Today, the shift has come. Younger generations do not see the church as a building or believe the work of the church is done "inside" the building. Rather, they see the church as the presence of Jesus without walls.

- **How do you feel about this? Why?**
- **With the advent of the digital age, how can the church reach people beyond the physical building?**
- **What creative ideas do churches need to employ to spread the Gospel in the 21st century?**

DAY 5

Read [Matthew 4:18-22](#); [Mark 1:14-20](#); [Luke 5:1-11](#)

Each of these stories listed above are "call stories." Jesus appears and connects with ordinary people and creates the awareness within them that their purpose is greater than their vocation or their understanding of life as they know it.

- **Why do you think it was important for these stories to be told?**

Jesus shows those he "calls" they have a new life mission. Instead of maintaining their current vocations, they will now be "fishers of men and women."

- **How would this translate into our current reality?**
- **If Jesus appeared today and called you as His disciple, what methods would you need to employ to reach the masses?**

Thinking creatively means also letting go of the past; the way we have always done things. How we reach people for Jesus today is different than how we did it generations ago. Both Peter and Joshua knew the time had come to celebrate the past victories, but also to take the necessary step to risk it all for Jesus. Peter got out of the boat and Joshua put it on the line when he commanded the people to choose. Peter and Joshua's story reminds us we too must be "all in".

Give some thought to and pray on what you will do today to commit to your church, St. Paul UMC, and to be "all in."