

Over three thousand years ago, Joshua asked his people to vote:

“Choose this day,” he said.

On November 8th, Americans will go to the polls and make a choice. It’s an important choice! It will be an historic day in the life of our country.

Three days later, after our elections, on November 11th we will celebrate Veterans Day; also a significant day in our history. We will take time to reflect and honor those who have sacrificed so much for the United States of America.

It seems that significant events happen in the month of November in our country’s history. On November 10, 1775, the Continental Congress created the United States Marine Corps — which is remarkable if for no other reason than there were no United States in 1775.

On Nov. 10th 1928, Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne delivered the most famous locker-room speech in history, rallying his underdog team to an unlikely defeat of Army. “Win one for the Gipper!” he cried out to his players. The Irish could have used that yesterday in their game against Michigan State.

On Nov. 10th in 1969, *Sesame Street* debuted to criticism that it was too entertaining to ever be educational for children. Forty-seven years later kids are still counting with the Count and learning that “C is for Cookie.” Maybe Elmo and Big Bird should run for President and Vice-President.

But of all the November historical happenings, perhaps none has as much *spiritual legacy* as the decision of Samuel Hill, John Nicholson and William Knights. Together they formed The Gideons, and on November 10th the Gideons will celebrate the 108-year anniversary of the placement of the first Gideon Bible in a room at the Superior Hotel in Superior, Montana.

The three men were all traveling businessmen. They had a shared vision of reaching other traveling businessmen with the gospel. From that first Bible placement to today, the Gideons are in more than 200 countries; and have distributed more than 1.3 *billion* Bibles.

Research from the hotel industry reports that approximately 25 percent of travelers read the Bibles in their hotel rooms. This means that *each* Gideon Bible, which lasts an average of six years in a hotel, is read by 2,300 people!

That’s a legacy with impact!

American Veterans have left us a great legacy!

U.S. Presidents have too!

We all leave a legacy!

Life confronts us – life interrupts our plans – life takes us down roads we never imagined and some we didn't want to travel --

I wondering why the only thing in the hotel room that you're welcome to take with you are those things that will get you clean — soap, shampoo and the Bible.

Scripture has a way of confronting us too.

A little boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked up the object and looked at it. What he saw was an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages.

“Mama, look what I found,” the boy called out.

“What have you got there, dear?”

With astonishment the young boy answered, “I think it's Adam's underwear!”

People have a way of confronting us.

Joshua confronts us in our text for today. And in so doing, like the three men who placed a Bible in a Montana hotel room 108 years ago,

Joshua left a legacy. Our text shows us a Joshua who was able to bring clarity to the issues that confronted the Israelites and confront us today.

Joshua said, “Choose this day whom you will serve.”

God used Moses to lead his people. God passes the mantle of national leadership on to Joshua. The amazing life of Moses is summed up in Deuteronomy 34:10: “Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.”

Perhaps we Americans, would like a President whom the Lord knows face to face.

Just imagine, you’re Joshua -- you’re supposed to step into Moses’ sandals. How hard is that? Succession can be tough. Think about the people who had to follow George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. Not easy. Who fills the gap for a Billy Graham, or a Mother Teresa? These are “one-of-a-kind” personalities.

So was Moses. So was Joshua. Joshua just didn’t know it. God had to remind him as God has to remind us, that we, too, are “one-of-a-kind” personalities. We have a legacy to leave; a ministry, a life to build-live-share, and somewhere along the line it’s going to involve the Bible; God’s word to us.

As soon as Moses dies, God starts speaking to Joshua. Joshua reads like a Knute Rockne speech from God to Joshua (as Pastor Diane shared last week) — “Be strong and courageous because I will be with you as I was with Moses...This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth.”

In other words, in the midst of life as life confronts us, as it surely will, stay faithful – be strong – be courageous.

God had inspired Moses to lead. Now he would do the same for Joshua. The legacy passed on to Joshua was profound. For his part, Joshua needed to forsake fear and embrace courage. As life confronts us it is easy for us to fear changes, outcomes and the future. We need courage to stay faithful to God and his Word, and to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Joshua was told to internalize the word of God; to meditate on it, and to live it. In this way he would not only extend the blessing that had been given to Moses but achieve it in an even more spectacular fashion. Moses led the Israelites through 40 years of wandering in a desert; Joshua would take them to the promised land and possess it.

At the end of his life, Joshua gathers the Israelites together; all of its leaders, elders, judges and officers and he gives them a history lesson; a lesson about the people of God. Here’s your legacy to build the future: “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” (v. 15).

In life, we sometimes follow the lower case “g” gods that take us away from the capital “G” God. I love my home. It’s my refuge, my personal sanctuary, but if I lost it, I would be okay.

I love the artwork in my home, the furnishings, but if I lost all of it, I would be okay.

I love my new “used” car, but if I didn’t have it, I’d be okay because I would still have my faith and I would still have my relationship to God.

In my previous parish, a couple lost their home and all their possessions to a fire. They had a music group that gave a yearly concert at the little country church I served. He said this, “We lost everything we had, the house, our furnishings, our clothes. God saved our lives. People have been so generous and kind to us. They have given us so much to start again.” With tears in his eyes, the man said, “But, let me tell you, the most humbling thing I’ve ever done... is put on another man’s underwear.”

The Israelites respond to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God and obey him” (v. 24). We will *serve* the Lord. The Hebrew word used here for *serve*, also means “**worship.**” We will *worship* the Lord.

Coming to worship on Sunday is one way we serve God.

So, this reluctant leader Joshua issues an imperative to all of us!

“Choose this day whom you will serve”

And this is the recurring message of Scripture. It accounts for why the lives of so many people have been transformed when they've opened a Bible, especially a Gideon Bible. The Gideon Bible has reached many people who have been at a crossroads in their lives, and when people read it, they often encounter some version of the Joshua Imperative: Choose this day; to internalize the word of God, to meditate on it, and to live it and to worship it. We are blessed each day with a choice -- a daily opportunity to choose -- and it's a biblical imperative.

But what does it mean to serve the Lord? I'm learning everyday what it means for me, but I can't answer that for you. Each of us has to find out what that choice means for our life – for embarking upon our spiritual journeys. What does it mean for you to serve and worship God, to follow the legacy of all of our ancestors in faith?

Joshua does not ask us to choose for anyone but ourselves. We can pray for others, but each of us has to decide for ourselves, whom we will serve. The invitation is to choose God; to allow God to lead, companion and befriend you in your life. This is an invitation to the love, care and mercy of

our Lord, Jesus Christ; to the hope of being transformed and redeemed and to a life of peace and gratitude.

Will accept this invitation to vote for God? Let us leave a legacy worthy of God's calling in our lives.

Every day is a significant day in a life of faith: we always get to choose God; the Big "G" God. Choose this day whom you will serve; whom you will worship. Amen.