**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**August 22nd, 2021**

**As For Our Household…**

1. **The Come to Jesus Moment**

In ministry and in general life, there’s been times where I have

had either a ‘Come to Jesus’ moment with myself or with others. The ‘Come to Jesus’ moment is the moment that you impart a hard truth, a difficult challenge, a blunt reality, or an ultimatum. Sometimes when I need to ground myself or others, this ‘Come to Jesus’ moment is a moment of movement or an active verb, rather than a passive acknowledgement.

 In our reading from Joshua today, though he wouldn’t call it a ‘Come to Jesus’ moment – he is doing just that. He is laying out a truth to the people: you have two options, you either serve God or you serve the gods of the world around you. It’s a choice, but it’s one you need to make, and for Joshua, the discernment is over – choose now, choose today, because if you stand for everything you stand for nothing at all.

 And fortunately, the people had the correct response, especially as we hear that line that we hear quoted or painted in homes: “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” The people continue after this favorite statement to then share all that God has done for them and how they have seen God act in their lives and in the lives of those in their community. The decision moves from affirmation and then to praise.

1. Come to Jesus

And so, I ask you and me the same question that Joshua asked the

people all those years ago: who are you going to serve?

 And in some ways, I feel uncomfortable as a proper Presbyterian of pastoral care. I want you to discern and to pray and to be mindful and to ask you to come to such a sharp decision feels a bit icky. That’s the technical theological term. Yet at some point, we need to lay down our cards and open our hearts and say – this is who I am, this is who I follow, and this is what is important to me.

 I think we do this act of commitment several times in our lives. There are traditions or rituals, such as baptism, communion, confirmation, reaffirmation of membership, and the like that reinforces that commitment. Following the sermon, there will be a practical means of reaffirming your commitment to Christ by reciting the Apostle’s Creed together and saying what you believe from your heart into the harmonious sound of the congregation.

 It is important for us, individually and as a people, to name who we are and who we claim to be, not only once in our lives, but throughout life. The simplest way to explain why is that we all change and morph and transform in this life through our ever evolving beliefs and experiences, and we need to once again say ‘Yes’ to Jesus.

1. Not there yet

I’m also aware that some of you might be thinking – Oh man, I

wasn’t expecting the pastor to ask us to commit to Christ today or maybe you are thinking – I’m in a difficult time with God and I don’t know where we stand and if I don’t say this creed, everyone is going to make fun of me or think I’m a big dork.

 And if that’s you today, I encourage you to calm down, to let that anxiety ease up a bit. I say that because I can almost guarantee that you are not the only person having that feeling in this sanctuary – we all struggle, we all grapple, we all wonder why things happen and sometimes we wake up in the morning and look around this world and say – where is God in this. In fact, I’d say that’s a really normal feeling to experience and I wouldn’t rush away from where that feeling is moving you to as you grow and expand your faith in new and challenging ways.

 I would also be a “big great liar liar pants on fire” if I said that I didn’t sometimes feel that way myself. There have been moments in my college years where I could sit in the sanctuary but I couldn’t say the Lord’s Prayer. I’ve sat where you have, I’ve sat up here, and I’ve looked around our world and I’ve looked at elements of life and then I’ve looked up at the skies and had a good stormy debate with God. I’ve also had a dual experience, where I’ve looked at the faces of our children, or seen the sacred magic of a prayer shawl, or the holy silence of a sanctuary at a Lenten service and I’ve been profoundly moved and amazed at who God is and the knowledge that I am not alone, but I serve God who is able to act in ways that I cannot express in words. I live with the good and the bad, I live with God in it, with fumbles and foibles and mercies and unexplainable graces.

1. When you say the creed

So let me be clear in this Come to Jesus moment, I’m not asking

you to say a creed where you are in a perfect relationship with God where there is no pain or suffering or questions or longings. I don’t think that’s a creed I could ask anyone to faithfully say.

 What I’m asking today isn’t – will you be awesome at serving God and have a strong faith every moment of every day. What I am asking is very similar to what Joshua asked the people – can you lay aside the ways of the world and seek to follow God? Can you choose to make that commitment to seek God and see the places where God is working and moving and doing miraculous things? Can you choose to have a good row with God about the happenings in the world and recognize that God can handle your human response of anger or frustration? Can you believe in God and know that on this Earth, there will be mysteries that will always be unexplainable, and that sometimes you will need to sit in the discomfort of that?

 Or in other words, in short phrase – Can you choose God and actively seek to find God in this world?

1. Yes and No

I hope, today, that you can. I hope that you can live in a world

where you can say the creed from your heart authentically and know that it’s okay to also feel the conflict or entangled in a bit of challenge.

 But if you can’t today, if you aren’t ready to commit to God, we aren’t a hell and brimstone community. You are safe here and you are safe to not say the words. All I would ask is that you intentionally and authentically choose for yourself who you will serve. Maybe you aren’t ready to make that commitment, maybe there’s too much conflict and if that’s the case, guess what…you’re still safe here. I don’t need you to believe in Christ – and while that sounds a bit wrong, what I mean is that I want you to make the choice for yourself, not for the person next to you, or in front of you, or at the pulpit – you make the choice yourself.

 After you make that choice, after you make that commitment, do not let that be a statement where you say the words and get to leave this sanctuary unchanged. When you commit or recommit, something changes – not only do you say the words, but you act on them as well.

 And as disciples who choose Christ, we then invite others in a safe, respectful, and sometimes in a blunt yet loving way – into a relationship with Christ. We share our challenges, we share where we see God acting, and we invite others to come along on the journey. We do the things that might make us feel uncomfortable – we invite our neighbors to church, we catch up with someone in the grocery line about what’s going on in their life of faith, and we take all that we espouse and then we live it out there, in the big, great, diversified world.

 So, to you this morning, I ask the question again – who will you follow? It’s up to you.