

The Declaration of Dependence **Joshua 24:1-28**

Joshua, Israel's leader, who had succeeded Moses, was "*old and well advanced in years*" (23:1). The Lord had given Israel rest from all their surrounding enemies....something they hadn't enjoyed in a LONG, LONG time!

Now on the brink of going "the way of all the earth" (in other words, he was about to die), Joshua assembles all the tribes of Israel and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. It was time to Reflect, to Rule, and to Remind the people regarding their responsibilities before the Lord their God.

As we consider this passage from Joshua 24 on this day before July 4th, also commonly referred to as *Independence Day*, it would be wise for us, the people of Kossuth St. Baptist Church, to look around and evaluate with the measure of Scripture the landscape which surrounds us.

We live in a country where love of country is exalted, pride runs deep and where the notion of independence is high on the list of values espoused by the nation in which we live. If we are not careful, it is easy to allow the ideals of independence (about which we hear frequently) to overtake our way of thinking when it comes to our relationship with our Creator/Owner and with His church, God's people...upon whom we are most dependent.

Please do not misunderstand me...I am thankful for the freedoms we enjoy in this nation...freedoms which have been fought for and defended through the years. However, if we are not careful, it would be easy, even natural, to become self-reliant, self-sufficient, yea, even self-indulgent, forgetting the One to Whom we owe the freedoms we enjoy.

So this morning, on the day before Independence Day, as we, the people of God assembled in this place to worship the One True and Living God, come to the Word of God, I believe the required response to the passage before us is to gaze upon the beauty of our Creator; to reflect upon Him: the One who made us for Himself, the One who provides our every need, the One who has sent His Son in order that He might save a people for Himself for the glory of His name, in order that we might grow in our understanding of His greatness and that our love and service of Him would be deepened.

As should be the daily practice of every believer, let us together reaffirm our dependence upon Him for who He is and for what He has done on our behalf.

Message Outline:

1. **Remembering the works of God, (1-13)**
 - a. **The Heritage of Israel**
 - b. **Fear (14-15)**
 - c. **Serve (worship)**
 - i. **In sincerity**
 - ii. **In faithfulness**
2. **Resolved to do the works of God, (16-18)**
 - a. **Focused on benefits received**
 - b. **We will serve the LORD, for He is our God**
3. **Revelation of the character of God, (19-20)**
 - a. **Holy**
 - b. **Jealous**
4. **Requirement for exclusive Dependence (21-24)**
 - a. **Witnesses against themselves**
 - b. **Put away foreign gods**
 - c. **Incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel**
5. **Record of Israel's Declaration of Dependence (25-29)**

- a. **Written words (by Joshua)**
- b. **Spoken words (Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel...)** (v. 2)

(Psalm 44:1-3 ESV)

- [1] O God, we have heard with our ears,
our fathers have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days,
in the days of old:
- [2] you with your own hand drove out the nations,
but them you planted;
you afflicted the peoples,
but them you set free;
- [3] for not by their own sword did they win the land,
nor did their own arm save them,
but your right hand and your arm,
and the light of your face,
for you delighted in them.

Points of Action:

1. Evaluate your position before the One, True and Living God this morning.
 - a. If you are known by Him: Rejoice and Worship!
 - b. If you don't know...or know that you are not one of His: Repent and Believe!
 - c. DON'T DELAY!!
2. Recognize the (many) dangers (even good things) which draw you away from the One upon whom your life depends.
3. Take action (even drastic measures) to alienate yourself from those things which threaten the well-spring of your life.
4. Resolve to fix your gaze on the One who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light...so that in good times and in not so good times...your trust is in Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Joshua 23 and 24. What do you notice about the actions attributed to God in these two chapters?
2. What impact do you see this having on the purpose for which Joshua has gathered the people of God together?
3. Look back over the past year...the past 5 years...the past 10 years...in what ways have you seen God at work during that time in your personal life? In the life of your family? In the KSBC family?
4. It has been said: *The church is only one generation away from apostasy* (renunciation of belief or holding to a belief that is not according to Scripture).
 - a. Do you agree with this statement?
 - b. On what basis? (read Judges 2:11-15)
 - c. What are some things that we at Kossuth St. Baptist Church should be doing to protect ourselves from apostasy?
5. Do you focus more on what God has done for you, or who He is? What are the dangers of placing too much emphasis on what God does on your behalf? How might you keep from making this mistake?
6. As you reflect on the two aspects of God's character presented in the message (His holiness and His jealousy), which do you need to learn about/meditate upon more? In your Christian walk, have you been taught about one of these more than the other? Why do you think this is?
7. As you consider the two ways Joshua commands the people of God to demonstrate their desire to fear and worship the LORD (put away the foreign gods that are among you/incline your heart

to the LORD, the God of Israel), what are some specific things you can identify in your own life which need attention?

8. Two specific areas were identified in the message regarding the Word of God (the written word (by Joshua)/the word spoken by the Lord to the people). How can your relationship to Scripture be renewed/strengthened as a result of today's study? What one step will you take this week to see this accomplished?
9. One of the blessings the Lord has left His people for their good and His glory is the local church. Read over the Membership Covenant of Kossuth Street Baptist Church (see below). Have you taken the step of church membership? If so, are you fulfilling the covenant you have entered into as a member? What areas can you identify which need attention? Find a fellow member and seek accountability. If you are not a member, can you identify the reasons you have not yet identified yourself with a local church? What action needs to take place (even this week) to clearly identify yourself with the people of God?
10. Read Psalm 44:1-3. Can you identify the aspects of this Psalm which make it a fitting conclusion to the story of Joshua? What are they?

Membership Covenant of Kossuth Street Baptist Church

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the public confession of our faith having been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, solemnly and joyfully enter into this covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We purpose, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to promote its spiritual and numerical growth; to attend its services regularly; to sustain its worship, ordinances and doctrines; to submit to its discipline and the authority of its officers; to give it sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to give faithfully of time and talent in its activities; to contribute cheerfully and regularly as God has prospered us, to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, to the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout all nations.

We also purpose to maintain family and private devotions; to train our children according to the Word of God; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk carefully in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to abstain from all activities, habits, and lifestyles that dishonor our Lord Jesus Christ, cause stumbling to a fellow believer, or hinder the gospel witness; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the cause of Christ, our Savior, and to give Him preeminence in all things.

We further purpose to encourage one another in the blessed hope of our Lord's return; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feelings and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation.

We moreover purpose that when we move from this community, we will as soon as possible unite with another church of like faith and order, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.