

Sermon during Matins in the chapel of St.Timothy at LTS on Joshua 24:1-2a.13-16.22-28

Hymn: 655,1-3 *"Lord, keep us steadfast in your word..."*

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: (Jos 24:1-2 NIV) ... "So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.' Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! [It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God." Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD." Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied. "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him." On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD. "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God." Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to their own inheritance.

Dear friends of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ + Grace, peace and mercy be to you from the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit + First Mose dies and then Joshua. That's the framework of this book sixth book in the bible titled: "Joshua". It's a history long gone, but the shadows fall deep into our age too and not only if you are an Afrikaaner like F.W. de Klerk, but also if you are an African like

Thabo Mbeki. So I presume that this old book talks loud and clear to all of us in this room and perhaps even to some outsiders.

We live in a revolutionary age. The old is gone, the new has come. Well, not quite, but we're getting there. Rhodes had to fall, but so do Strydom, Totius, Paul Kruger and some smaller spirits be it in the mother city of Cape Town or in this capital still named "Pretoria" (although the struggle to call it "Tshwane" is even older than this very Seminary of ours) or even in that venerable center of academia Oxford, where recipients of the Rhodes scholarship are running storm against the very founder of their carefree and sponsored life. Yes, we live in a transitional time (people just love change as long as it is demanded from others and they themselves don't need to change!) the old is not quite gone. There are still the ghosts of our colonial past dawdling around and sadly not only in that grim Voortrekker monument just listen to the voice of that master colonist de Klerk from yesteryear even yesterday, whose speech I just read this morning. On the other side the new colonists are not yet so firmly entrenched by their ever gracious and inviting hosts like Zumzum, whose forebears invited and supported the British invaders into Zululand in the 19th century already and were back then rewarded for this "little" act of high treason and opportunistic betrayal with land called Nkandla by these grateful conquerors from that far-away Island, who were not just striving to build a railroad from Cape to Cairo but an empire across the globe – never mind, what the aborigines, first nations, natives, locals or indigenous people thought, said or did. Well, this Nkandla tradition of resourceful cooperation or corrupt buccaneering and dishonest opportunism with the colonists, probably dates back to the very days van Riebeck landed and started dialogue, exchange and fair trade (or was it just plain coercion?) with those strandlopers and Hottentots of the fair Cape of good Hope in 1652 and futher back too, because people are prone to do wrong, wired to take sinful chances and even go in straight rebellion and opposition to the living God. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. This sinful way of opportunistic self-enrichment continues as our president courts the Guptas, the Russian tsar and countless Chinese in the presidential courts and international centers of power like Davos: Come in and make yourselves at home. "So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant." The juicy pieces from the rich man's table fall even as far as Angola or Sudan so that they (Dos Santos & Bashir) can continue with their evil ways and even get away with murder and genocide. There it is a bag full of millions, there it is a free ticket to ride & escape prosecution.

See, that is the course of the world. The Israelites have a long history that goes even beyond van Riebeck. They were slaves in Egypt long, long ago. Later on they were free, masters and colonizers themselves. That's the course of history. What goes up, must come down and what is down, will go

up – at least sometimes even if it takes time and a war or two and then what seems to be fixed in stone is again just passing – like the Roman empire or the British one or the Soviet one for that matter and that which seemed to be just an idea, a fleeting fancy gets real, tangible, something everybody can see, touch and feel, but that too will pass like the mountains and oceans, the high heavens and the unending skies until His kingdom comes and IX judges living and the dead. That all will pass away one day, but God's word will never pass away. He lives now and forever and you shall live also.

So Israel are the one people of God. Chosen and elected by the highest God and with the much more holy calling and much higher calling than that of being Roman free citizen like St.Paul, or British like David Livingstone or Zulu like Buthelezi. Long before their dismal sojourn in Egypt. Long ago, when God called Abraham Not because they were so special and great, but because they were especially small and insignificant. Everybody should realize that Israel was what it was because of its connection to the living God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the one and only God – no other God beside him. All others were but effigies, idols and dummies really even if they had high and mighty names like Zeus and Thor, Allah or Krishna.

God describes this through his faithful servant Joshua preaching to the Israelites at Schechem: *'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.'* *'Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.'* (Jos 24:2-7 NIV)

That's the long story short. Now the Israelites knew this off by heart. This is like us confessing the Apostolic Creed every morning. See, that's what the Lord has done to you in creation, salvation and sanctification – to each one of us in Holy Baptism, through his Holy Word and by the most holy Testament of his very precious and most holy Body & Blood too. Therefore:

- Fear the living LORD and God Jehova, the Lord of hosts (Zebaoth), the Father, Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God, who brought Israel out of Egypt & Babylon, who redeemed the world on Golgotha, when the only begotten Son of God,

the son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin mother Mary was crucified – serve him with all faithfulness, with gladness and joy, with dedication and from your whole heart, with all your strength and power, and with all your mind, body and soul. You shall fear, love and trust him above all things and nothing else – whether up in the skies, down on earth or under the ground in the deep waters – don't pray to them, don't worship them, don't serve them either.

- Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Forget about the ancestors (Badimo/amaDlozi) and that high place of local idolatry called "Freedom Park", which is nothing else than a realm of past spirits and idols and dead people. Therefore don't look back, don't be caught up by the old, vain and destructive and self-serving ways, which some try to revitalize in this or that renaissance. Don't expect salvation from the world, because that needs salvation itself, it can't help itself and can't help you either; don't look at your navel or into your deepest soul – there's no help forthcoming, it's just a can of worms! Rather look up towards IX, the founder and perfecter of your faith. He is our Lord and saviour alone together with the Father & the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns one God now and forever!)
- Remember Moses, and me Joshua and my household, the faithful apostles, prophets, martyrs and holy saints, forgiven sinners we will serve the LORD." And they did. That's the one holy Christian Church throughout the ages, that lives by the grace of God through the forgiveness of all her sins, waits for the resurrection of the dead and a life everlasting. They are a holy people, sanctified and made holy by God's miracles and wonders. He has called them through the holy gospel to IX and the true faith and trust in him. He has called them from all nations, races and classes like is gathered here in chapel.

Throughout the Ages this church has struggled against the false prophets, the evil kings and the faithless people and masses. That was Jeremiah's fate against the scumbag priest Pashur or that false prophet Hananja. They said: Trust in your battlements, trust in your allies, trust in all and everything! You'll be safe! Don't worry, be happy! Peace, peace – yet there was no peace. The true and faithful prophet Jeremiah warned: You are forgetting the one and only God! This can't be right. It will end in disaster and so it did. Jeremiah died in exile in Egypt. Far away. Carried away as prisoner in chains by the powers that be, who were looking for life and salvation outside of God's promises. Jeremiah suffered the death of a martyr, but his life and words remain a true witness for us. Pointing us to the true and living God and his most holy will and good promises. Just like the apostle St. Paul. He is the one missionary, who stood up against those Judaizers. It is he, who reprimanded the Galatians: "If you limp on both sides, if you hope to improve your godly standing as justified sinners by the forgiveness through IX by doing your own thing – be it circumcision or some self-found rules

and higher orders of salvation like those of the monks and nuns seeking higher graces and degrees of sanctification through poverty, celibacy & human obedience - you have lost IX and the promise of his gospel and his gifts bestowed onto you by holy Baptism! Whoever preaches a gospel different from the one – even if it was an angel – he would stand accursed and have no part in salvation, but would fall back into sin, death and the power of the devil. St. John the Baptist witnessed against mighty Herod: “It is not right, that you have your brothers sister!” We could alternate that with it is not right and against God’s command it is not right that you have 5 wives and father 20 children even with the daughters of your friends and not only because she is underage and you HIV +ve. It’s not right, because you already have one wife. That is enough. Good, right and salutary! So its not right, that you forsake your wife and abandon your children, that they grow up fatherless, homeless, destitute, that you call marriage, what is reserved for the union of man & wife, that you forget that life is holy and can’t be taken – neither in the womb by grievous assault and bodily harm to both mother & child in abortion – nor because of frailty, loss of memory and bodily control, old age even if it gets the wonderful renaming as Euthansia (Good death!) or in German: *Gnadentod* (Death by grace. Sic! What a misnomer!) It is not right. It is against God’s will. And so the Baptist lost his head. Cut off because of the king’s promise. Herod was more afraid of losing face before his friends, than to go against the will of the living God. It is not right. And IX himself says: Whoever does not confess me before me, I will not confess before the Father. He who does not acknowledge IX, will not be acknowledged in the final judgement. He’s lost. For there is only one way to the Father and to salvation and everlasting life in the light of God – that is through IX our Lord and Saviour. He is the only way, the truth and the light. To him be all glory and honour, praise and thanks now and forever. Amen.

The peace of the Lord be with you always + Amen.