

Sept 5 1982

Broadcast 1

5445a

Call to worship:

Now's your chance

You can join in the worship of God
without making a move.

That's ~~true and not true~~ totally true.

If we come to a GOD-MEETING in this
service of worship - there will be some movement
all right.

But it is also true that God is closer
than hands and feet.

We meet God when we stop running

We meet God when we unmask

We meet God when we meet each other

You can be doing these things right now
right where you are.

LET US PRAY

Almighty God - Our lives have to do with
you - whether we know it or not. We know
there's something wonderful about life. We
know too that things in life aren't going right.
What we take to be good - isn't good. What
we trust is not to be trusted.

May this be a time when we are given
light to see. When our worst with life is
seen to be a worst with you - May this
be a time when life is put right again.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen.

Thy name is UNTO THE HILLS

→ across all of life up to the top of the hills
O where for me shall I go from where I can find the
from God the Lord who come by covenant - from the
heart of earth to

SERMON ①

It is sermon time. I'm Jack Shaver and this is the last time I will be preaching on this broadcast as a member of First United Church Staff. ~~Next regular~~ Next Sunday night we are back broadcasting from the Church. But I won't be in the pulpit. As you regular listeners will be tired of hearing I am retiring after 40 years in the United Church minister.

It will be impossible to free this talk of all valedictory flavor. Of the grief that goes with coming to the end of my participation in an endeavor I meant very much. You have been with me in a very strange way through the years of my association with this broadcast of worship and I shall miss you.

There's you, there's me, there's the world and there are our readings for tonight! What has God in mind tonight for that mix?

The Reading from Hebrew Scriptures is famous. Its punch line becomes a title for a Canadian Novel. It is often the text of sermons - especially when preachers want to talk about decision-making and resolute behavior.

"Choose you this day whom you will serve!
 --- as for me and my house
 we will serve the Lord."

The Straight Story goes like this ^{as the people of the}
 The lines are spoken by Joshua - He addresses
 the assembled people of Israel at the end
 of their 40 year sojourn in the wilderness and
 at the end of their ~~conquest~~ ^{conquest} of the Promised
 Land. ~~Joshua~~ Joshua was one of the spies who
 went into the land of Canaan 40 years earlier.
 He was among the minority who recommended
 that Israel begin the conquest right then. But
 at that time the timidity of the majority
 prevailed and Israel chose not to go it.
 The nation wandered the wilderness for 40
 years, a new generation ~~arose~~ ^{arose} who would have
 stomach for the conquest.

At this great address Joshua reminds
 the people that their forefathers worshipped
 false gods before Abraham set out on his
 pilgrimages, and that while in Egypt
 they worshipped the gods of the Egyptians
 - now on the ~~edge~~ ^{completion} of the conquest of Canaan
 it was up to them to decide whom to
 worship →

Choose you this day whom you will
 serve in gods you have worshipped
 or in the Lord your neighbor
 as for me and my house - we will serve the
 LORD.

"Choose you this day whom you will serve!
--: As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord.

The Straight Story goes like this. ^{at the end of his life} The lines are spoken by Joshua - he addresses the assembled people of Israel at the end of their 40 year sojourn in the wilderness and ~~at the end of their journey into the Promised Land.~~ ^{Conquest} Joshua was one of the spies who went into the land of Canaan 40 years earlier. He was among the minority who recommended that Israel begin the conquest right then. But ~~the~~ that time the timidity of the majority prevailed and Israel chose not to go it. The nation wandered the wilderness for 40 years until a new generation ~~was~~ ^{was} born who would have stomach for the conquest.

At this great address Joshua reminds the people that their forefathers worshipped false gods before Abraham set out on his pilgrimage, and that while in Egypt they worshipped the gods of the Egyptians - now on the ~~edge~~ ^{completion} of the conquest of Canaan it was up to them to decide whom to worship ->

Choose you this day whom you will serve - your gods your fathers worshipped gods of your neighbors
As for me and my house - we will serve the LORD.

The people give a resounding response.

— Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other Gods

For it is the Lord our God who brought us and our Fathers up from the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage.

Therefore we also } far be it from us that we should
will serve the Lord } for he is our God!

But the people who wrote that story ~~down~~ in the form in which it was handed on to us knew very well that that was not how it was.

There is just never a time in the story of the People of Israel — before ~~or~~ after the Conquest, or all through its checkered history with Tribal leaders — and later with royal dynasties, — ^{when the people do a very good job of serving the Lord} There is just never a time when the people aren't needing a warning about chasing after false gods. And their occupation of the Promised land is never that secure.

It's almost as if our straight story was written to slow up the Purity of Christ — thumping high resolve. Except in respect to how its ~~message~~ can be used as a witness against us; — as the Deuses Falling verse 18 have Joshua saying — you don't know what you

are saying — which must be put up a marker — used as a witness against you

Those of us who use the sacramental lectionary have been dealing for weeks with the 6th Chapter of John's Gospel. We've seen the author wrestle with questions & answer in a troubled struggle to make some important distinctions. The Chapter ~~is~~ written as a dialogue about the True Bread of Life. The writer searches for a way to say what the difference is between the bread of life that leads to eternal life ~~the~~ and ways of sustaining life that don't last. The language makes it clear after it gives a true statement of what can be trusted to save us, in as distinct from all the stuff that humans trust what doesn't ~~save them~~ ^{save them}.

The closer he gets to saying what ~~is~~ ^{the true bread of life} is the more ~~the~~ ^{he} puts people off: → As we come upon our reading for this Sunday even ~~the~~ ^{the} disciples are being put off.

"This is a hard saying - who can listen to it." → and John has Jesus reply in "Do you take offense at this what if it gets tougher →" — many disciples take off — Down to the 12 → To whom shall we go — are you going also —

Peter's reply — to whom shall we go, you have words of eternal life — who else is there to go →

You would hardly call this

~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ the flourish of high resolve.

This is Israel

~~This~~ is the People — will it vain host
acting as a witness against it. ~~an answer~~

There are the followers ^{Jesus in flesh} down to the 12 ^{and it makes}
and there will disappear before its over. ^{and high} ^{people}

~~There are the~~
people

Whom the Biblical Story says God has chosen,

This is the crowd through whom the steadfast
love of God became known on the Earth:

There are the apostles through whose witness
we have come to know God's love of the
world. God's victory over sin and
Death.

Maybe it is because of my 40 year
melancholy — but for me these circumstances
revealed in our two scripture lessons —
contain some remarkably good news.
— Actually I think any melancholy will do.

Serious life teaches us: that the world is a
hard place to love:

- 20 who can listen to the saying — God loves the world
who can believe it?
who can bear the blows & pain of believing it?
who can believe that have cast out fear far long
who can believe that the victory of the world's sin
has overcome the world.
Who can partake of that flesh?

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if God was
like I say

You see - I can believe that That would
be Good news of God ~~that would~~ That would
be the best news There is -
But I am not extra good at trusting
the same.

I am not very good at trusting ~~myself~~
my existence to the same.

What today's readings tell me is
that I have lots of excellent company in
that ambiguity.

Not Point to something now! -

Jesus said - This is why I told
you that no one can come to me unless
it is granted him by the Father.

You know who has begun the work of trust
in you. - The one who can keep you
and raise you up on the last day.
The one who can finish the work of
trust to be begun in you.

2010 George Beverly Shea
"His Eye is on the Sparrow"