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*“Who you are and Whose”*

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Sermon Text: Joshua 24:14-18/ 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 / Matthew 5:13-20  
Mariner Sands Chapel: Friendship Sunday

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When you think about it, there really are only two religions in the world: one religion demands what you must do to make yourself acceptable to God. You do your best to reach up to God. The other religion is the kind in which God gave His very best to reach down to you. Most religions demand a lot from a person, one religion delivers everything necessary from God. The Bible says you are saved by grace and not by works. Let me tell you of three friends of God; Abraham, Joshua and Paul.

One of the earliest followers of God that we read about in the Bible is Abraham. In James 2:23 it says that Abraham was a friend of God. Abraham was called out by God to become the leader of a great nation, and by faith Abraham left behind the life and culture he had. He traveled in hope to a place where God would fulfill that promise (Romans 4:18). Abraham knew God by faith, and that transformed him.

Joshua too, was a friend of God, chosen to lead the Jewish people into the land promised to them through Abraham. Joshua told the people that once they entered the land of promise, they too had to leave behind the life and culture of their ancestors in Egypt, Ur, and the wilderness of Sinai. Joshua said, “Choose today whom they would serve.” Then he made the statement personal. He said “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua knew who he was; a leader who was fueled by faith, who followed God, and who fulfilled what was promised. Joshua took this enormous band of wanderers in the desert and established them as God’s city on a hill for all the world to see.

Jesus, in His sermon on the mount according to the gospel of Matthew, says “you are a city on a hill.” A promised land awaits every believer. It is called the Kingdom of Heaven. In order to reach the new kingdom, you have to leave behind what is fake. The baggage of your past, like the life Abraham had in Ur, or the culture that the Hebrew slaves had in Egypt, or the stuff you tried so hard to do to impress God, all that must be left behind. To enter the land where God reigns as king, you have to follow a leader who makes the way for you. In Jesus, God did His very best to give the world access to eternity in Heaven. In Jesus, we see a friend, who knows us better than anyone. If we are following Jesus in this life, we become God’s children. Jesus said (John 15:15) you are my friends if you do what I command you. He also said, “Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Jesus did his very best to make salvation available to everyone. Jesus was the light of the world (John 8:12).

The Apostle Paul was a friend of God, and a follower of Jesus. In his letter to the church in Corinth, he preached a simple message. Everything we need to know about God can be seen in the life of Jesus Christ. It does not require elegant speech or rhetorical arguments to persuade our minds to find peace with God. Instead, all that is necessary is to follow Jesus. Believe Jesus is the Lord. Invite the Spirit of God into your life to take over and give you divine power to become holy citizens of the Kingdom of heaven. When the power of God comes into your life, you also have a friendship with God just like Abraham, Joshua, and Paul. You possess a flavor for living that everyone can recognize. It is salty. The things you do as a result of your friendship with God has a way of causing others to praise God for your faithfulness.

I leave you with three simple principles from our scriptures today. Friendship with God is the result of a relationship. God does His very best to make this relationship possible. Second, your faith is very personal, but it should not be private. Let your light shine, let your deeds and your words have a salty flavor of God’s love toward others. Third, following God is a simple choice. It was for Abraham, Joshua and Paul. If you know who you are and whose you are, the choice is simple. The choice is profound.