

## **We Will Serve the Lord**

Joshua 24: 1-3a, 14-25

Psalm 78 VU page 792 Part – 1

*You are invited to eavesdrop on a conversation between Joshua's wife Anna and one of the other women of the household. They can be seated on chairs angled towards each other or simply stand. They were dressed in long dark skirts, with shawls wrapped around them.*

Anna: That is so typical of Joshua... to make a statement like that as if he speaks for all the household.

Woman: What statement?

Anna: The one where he is talking to the people about choosing who they will serve, Yahweh, or the foreign gods and that HIS household will serve the Lord

Woman: Well, he is your husband, he DOES speak for all the household! He is the head of the household and also the one chosen to be a leader amongst the people...

Anna: Leader, shmeader! Don't I have any say in this?

Woman: Well...

Anna: This is my household as well... you know as well as I do who makes sure we have food and clothing in adequate supply... even for our servants and slaves.

Woman: Yes, but...

Anna: Those other Gods served us well... we knew what we could expect from them...

Woman: But...

Anna: And there is Joshua, telling the people that Yahweh is a jealous God... that we have to make a decision about who we are going to serve... well, actually, he made the decision for us didn't he!

Woman: Well, that is his responsibility.

Anna: Well, it may be his responsibility, but I don't like being told what to do and who to worship!

Woman: Anna, are you just being stubborn? Tell me, if it were your decision to make for the household, what would you decide?

Anna: Well... Yahweh is the one who brought our people out of Egypt... the one who freed us from oppression... the one who was there in a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of cloud by night.

Woman: Yes, I remember hearing those stories around the campfires at night.

Anna: And God was always with our people... even when they were afraid and wanted to turn back.

Woman: God fed our people in the wilderness... even when they didn't recognize what they were being offered as food.

Anna: Yahweh is a faithful God... okay, okay, you have convinced me... Joshua made a good decision! This household will serve the Lord!

Woman: And now we, or you, or Joshua has to figure out what that means!

Anna: Well, Joshua seems to be busy, so what do you say, you and I figure out what this means for our household?

Woman: Good idea!

Anna: Do you remember the 10 commandments?

Woman: Of course!

Anna: The one that is coming to mind is the one about not having any other Gods before the one God...

Woman: Yes...

Anna: Putting Yahweh first... not being tempted by the gods of the people in this land that we have been given.

Woman: Okay, but I have no intention of starting to worship any of those gods, that doesn't seem like it will be very difficult.

Anna: What if it has more meaning than that?

Woman: What do you mean?

Anna: What about if it means making sure that God is first in our lives... before everything else?

Woman: Everything?

Anna: Everything!

Woman: Well, we already bring the first fruits of the crops to the priests for their work.

Anna: Yes...

Woman: Have you ever thought about why we do it? Yes, it's a mitzvah, a good deed, to share what we have, but why?

Anna: Because it recognizes that everything we have comes from Yahweh; that we create and have nothing apart from God.

Woman: The earth and everything that it is in it belongs to God.

Anna: And we are just asked to give 10% back for God's work.

Woman: You mean we get to keep 90%?

Anna: Yup.

Woman: Wow! I had no idea.

Anna: It's called being good stewards of the earth... it is written in the very first book of our scriptures... we are given responsibility for the earth... and we are to exercise that responsibility wisely... because it does not belong to us, but to Yahweh... and to the future generations of our people that will inherit the land.

Woman: Okay, what else?

Anna: Well, I suppose that it means using all of our resources wisely.

Woman: Like honouring all of the people and what they have to offer... not expecting everyone to do the same thing.

Anna: Well, that's just common sense! Look at how Esther can weave, but ask her to bake bread... you never want to eat her bread...

Woman: And Miriam makes the tastiest bread... but don't ask her to tend the goats...

Anna: And little Moses is so good with the goats... but he can't tend the crops...

Woman: And Sarah has a green thumb... but...

Anna &  
Woman: Don't ask her to look after the young ones!

Woman: Ok, what else? What else does serving the Lord mean?

Anna: Well, since we were once strangers in this land, I think serving God would mean welcoming other strangers...

Woman: Strangers? What if they are different from us? What if they have different ideas?

Anna: I believe Yahweh still wants us to welcome them...

Woman: What about beggars? Are we supposed to welcome them too?

Anna: Of course, we don't choose who comes to our gates... but we can choose how we respond to them when they do come.

And we can look after the sick...

Woman: But aren't the priests supposed to do all those things? Isn't that why we give them the first fruits?

Anna: Can we turn away a hungry person at our door? I don't think so, not when we are trying to teach our children to be generous and kind and to put God first in their lives...

Woman: Some of this sounds difficult... I am not sure that everyone will go along with it...

Anna: That is one of the reasons why it is important for the leaders to follow these teachings... to set an example to our people...

Woman: Are you now saying that Joshua was right in making his pronouncement that he and his household will serve the Lord!

Anna: I guess I am! However, he still shouldn't have made it without consulting me!

Woman: What about these people gathered here this afternoon?

Anna: What do you mean?

Woman: Well, I can see by their fine clothes and well fed bodies that they live in a very different time from us. I am wondering how they might serve the Lord in their time.

Anna: That is a good question... what was the commandment that I reminded you of...

Woman: Thou shall have no other gods before the one God.

Anna: Right... and while they don't have foreign gods to contend with, they have many other things that could easily pull their loyalty away from God.

Woman: Oh? Like what?

Anna: Well, it seems as if these people have a lot of things... that they think they need... and so they work really hard to get money to buy the things... but then soon a new thing comes along and they need that... and they work some more to get more things... and their children want things... and they don't know how to say no... and pretty soon the things squeeze out all room for God...

Woman: Some of their things look pretty cool... I wouldn't mind having one or two of them myself...

Anna: Oh yes, me too... and the things are not the problem in themselves... it's when getting the things becomes more important than anything else... they work such long hours that they don't take Sabbath time to be refreshed... and reconnect with God... that is having another God before God...

Woman: Do you mean they work on the Sabbath?

Anna: Well, some of them have to... and some of them think they have to... some of them think they have no choice....

Woman: How can we help them?

Anna: We can remind them of what is really important... that with God and God's teachings at the centre of their life, their lives will be much richer than just having a bunch of stuff.

Woman: How will we do that? We are just a couple of Jewish women.

Anna: A long time after we lived, a great man arose... some said he was the Son of God and his name was Jesus...

Woman: What does that have to do with us, we are Jews?

Anna: Jesus was a Jew... and he grew up with all the same teachings as we did... and he taught others...

Woman: And those teachings are still important today?

Anna: Oh yes, it's simply really... the message is still the same... share what you have... look after the earth and all that inhabit it, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, welcome the stranger... Love God, and love your neighbour as yourself. Serve the Lord.

Woman: Can we pray for these people... that they and their households will serve the Lord.

Anna: O God, be with all people of the earth, help them to learn to serve you with humility, compassion and love. Amen.

© Rev. Catherine MacDonald – Permission granted to use/adapt with accreditation.