

Sunday Scriptures: 19th July 2020 Revd Janice Morgan

1 Kings 12:24 “Thus says the Lord, “You shall not go up or fight against your kindred the people of Israel. Let everyone go home, for this thing is from Me,” so they heeded the Word of the Lord and went home again, according to the Word of the Lord.”

The history of God’s relationship with His people is fraught with discord. Leaders and kings chosen and established by God, each in their way became corrupted by the authority and power that God had bestowed on them. In various circumstances and by different degrees each consulted advisers wise in the Lord, but chose to ignore those through whom God spoke in favour of their own desires. God sent prophets to them with warnings and instructions but many are the kings and leaders that rejected their words and even put God’s messengers to death. All this because of human arrogance mistakenly believing that being chosen and called to a position of leadership rendered them invincible. God has a plan and purpose for us all, some to be leaders, some to be servants and all sorts in between. But whatever task or purpose God has called us to fulfil, we must all, without exception, remember that it is God we are serving. We have no authority or power in ourselves but only in God; all authority, power and glory belong to God and God alone. If we choose to fight amongst ourselves we fight against God and the only outcome is to separate and split into opposing factions. As Jesus pointed out, a house divided against itself cannot stand ([Matthew 12:25](#); [Mark 3:25](#)). The Word of God is our saving grace that reveals the Truth, justice and righteousness of peace among us. *Who might we be serving? What might God be trying to say to us? Are we united in Christ or divided by opposing factions?*

King Solomon had reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years and Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, succeeded him. Jeroboam, son of Nebat, having spoken against Solomon’s harsh rule had fled to Egypt but now he returned. Jeroboam, along with all the people of Israel, pleaded with King Rehoboam to reduce the harsh conditions imposed on them by his father, King Solomon. However, King Rehoboam ignored the wise advice of his father’s attendants and listened instead to the egotistical agendas of others. As a result, King Rehoboam followed self-serving, heavy-handed advice and increased the harsh burdens on the people still further. As King, Rehoboam had been given responsibility for the care of God’s people, but instead he imposed corrupt leadership and cruel laws that crippled them. The result was resentment, murder and years of conflict within God’s people. Jealousy and envy ruled the day and God’s appointed leaders turned away from the Lord to build and worship false gods instead. Jeroboam, wanting to relieve the suffering of the people, amassed an army to remove King Rehoboam and impose his own reign upon both Israel and Judah. But God drew a line in the sand; enough is enough; and told them all to go home. Thankfully, this time, they listened to the Word of God and obeyed His instruction, thereby avoiding a bloody war. God does not want us to set ourselves up as judge and juror or take matters into our own hands. Only God can judge and meet out punishment; He would deal with them all, in His way and in His time. *Who do we look to for leadership? Whose voice are we listening to for advice? Are we discerning the messengers of God and listening to them?*

Sadly, human nature still operates in a state of sinfulness. Power still corrupts and those in positions of authority and leadership are just as susceptible to abusing their positions as ever they were, some overtly, others covertly. God has called us to serve His Kingdom by serving His people and living in grace with one another. How can we achieve this if we choose to behave with defensive aggression and jealous self-serving, self-aggrandising actions? Positions of leadership and authority bear a greater responsibility to mirror the sacrificial service demonstrated by Jesus ([Matthew 20:28](#); [Mark 10:45](#); [John 13:5](#)). When we

hear false testimony and see hypocrisy, it is our calling to stand in faith against it. When an injustice is committed we are called to seek Truth, serve justice and restore righteousness. When sin is committed we are called first to repent and remove the plank from our own eye before attempting to remove the speck from another's ([Matthew 7:5](#); [Luke 6:42](#)). The grace of God requires that we then forgive each other without submitting to or condoning sinful behaviour lest we all become just as bad as one another! It is not for us to judge others but to look first to ourselves and keep our relationship right with God. Only God knows a person's heart and sometimes he has to remove us from the scene in order that He can perform His Will, in His way and in His time.

The word of God is our foundation and one that Jesus constantly made reference to. Jesus asserted in [Matthew 5:17](#) that He came not to abolish God's Ten Commandments or the Hebrew prophecies, but to fulfil them! Some of these are yet to come and we would do well to be mindful of them. Time and time again we see in Scripture the consequences for God's people when they disobey His Word. Will the people of God never learn this lesson? This Hebrew Scripture tells one of many such stories of God's relationship with His people. Obedience to the Word of God brings untold, unimaginable blessings; conversely, disobedience provokes division and bloody war. If only the people of God would regain their sense of belonging, as His family, adhere to His Word and respect the messengers of God in our time. Perhaps then we would see revival and experience true unity and peace within the Body of Christ. Please God, may it be so. **Amen!**

Hymn/Song: Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You

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Brother, sister, let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace to
Let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey
And companions on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping,
When you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace to
Let you be my servant too.

Poem: CHOICES ©Janice Morgan-1997

I'm told that life means making choices,
But life is full of so many voices,
Yet above all others speaks just **ONE** voice,
Reminding me there is only **ONE** choice,
And if I listen carefully,
God will reveal the good in me.
