

*The five ideas* (Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18; John 6:60-69, Eph.5:21-31)

\* As it was considered by the first grade class, this world could be classified as a two-fold paradigm, physical world and mental world. *All things we were able to detect, the living and non living*, said a teacher, *belonged to the physical world, but there was still the invisible world where thoughts lived. Have you ever known that? My dear young friends, you couldn't catch them by a microscope or detect them by electro-magnetic sensors*, said the teacher; *you could do it only by your mind. By the way you also could create your own thoughts or repeat thoughts of other people. Do you like to create your own ideas?* Everybody exclaimed, *Yes, we like to do that. But don't be surprised*, said the teacher again, *if your ideas would not surprise anyone except your mama. On the other hand, the ideas that surprised many people belonged to geniuses like Buddha, Confucius, Solomon and so forth. Do you know any other geniuses from the past?* One young student, named Joe, shouted louder than others students, all together, *Jesus, the Son of Mary and Joseph, He was the greatest among all geniuses, also He was God. I had no greater joy after hearing that*, said the teacher.

\* Now after hearing the confession of Joe and the teacher of the first grade class, we have remembered our own in saying the Nicene Creed and after that Peter's confession as well in hearing the Gospel reading for today. All these confessions are shaped by the one belief regarding our God, Jesus Christ. After Peter, all churches hold the same confession, *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.*

\* Friends, with the words of this confession in mind let's ask the Lord for making us the faithful confessors. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the pretest of eternal life in Jesus Christ we are given to experience each time of gathering around your Word and Sacrament. We pray, sustain us in true confession with all community of saints now and in eternity. For to you alone belong the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Amen

\* Thinking of the class of the first grade students, I fully agree with their teacher regarding the ability to create new ideas by people in general and by geniuses. Like a young person, I cannot generate new ideas, but I can repeat the good ones as my own because I borrowed them from the Holy Spirit who generously allowed me to do it. The one thought I came up with reflects on two confessions made by the community of believers. I found that Joshua and his people made the similar confession with Peter and his friends. Both confessions were made due to God's mighty deeds in the lives of the OT and NT communities. In other words, no deeds – no confessions. A proof of this can be seen from (Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18) and (John 6:60-69), our Sunday readings.

\* When considering Joshua's request, the elders had to make a choice; would the new generation of Israel follow after gods of pagan nations or after the Lord of Abraham and other patriarchs? Joshua demanded an answer. In response, the people said, *Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods.* Then they declared, *for it is the LORD our God, who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went,*

*and among all the peoples through whom we passed, (Jos 24:16,17). Similar to that we've heard Peter's belief that also is ours, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God, (Joh 6:68,69). Therefore, both confessions attribute the mighty acts exclusively to the Lord. Like the people of Joshua's day, Peter also was the eye-witness of mighty deeds; for example, feeding the 5000, turning water into wine and so forth. That convinced Peter in Jesus' deity and he believed, and he confessed that Jesus is the Holy One of God. Two great leaders, Joshua and Peter came to the knowledge of One God of Israel by virtue of His mighty acts. The two leaders share the same beliefs with the new generations after them, so that people may also believe, and experience God's mighty acts in their personal lives.*

\* The next thought I borrowed from the database of the Holy Spirit flew out from the first one. Notice, after a confession Israel made the commitment. The commitment to serve the Lord demands a personal promise in loyalty. Joshua says that as for him he will serve the Lord, (v.15). In response the elders say, we will follow Joshua's decision, *we too will serve the Lord, because he is our God, (v.18)*. Thinking over the agenda we again found similarity between us. We too committed ourselves to serve the Lord as did Peter, Paul and other apostles? I remember my solemn promise on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, 2009. That day I promised the Lord to serve him by carrying out my duties as a pastor of this congregation. In response to our district President I said, *Yes, I promise, with the help of God*. I understand that it is easier to make a vow than to keep it. *If a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath of binding obligation on himself, he must not break his word, but must do whatever he has promised, (Num 30:2)*. Of course, I cannot do it perfectly but I am still doing it with the help of God with all my eagerness. Friends, the idea of keeping a solemn promise but not perfectly we found from Peter; once he didn't keep his confession but in spite of it he became the greatest among brothers. And by the way, don't forget your own promises, *We will, with the help of God*; those words were recorded in The Service of my Installation, p. 8. Thanks to the Holy Spirit for this thought and let's go for the next one.

\* The Hebrew Lexicon says that the word *to serve* (עבד in Hebrew) denotes a few meanings that we find interesting; they are *to keep in bondage* and *acting as a worshiper*. Next to that, if you say, *I will serve the Lord*, you need to know what in the world that is. Here is what we need to know. First, the people must believe that the Lord exists and that he will reward them if they seek him, (Heb 11:6). Second, by implication of the terms of an agreement, the faithful work hard to perform God's will. As for Israel the term included the Decalogue and the Law of Moses. Service to the Lord meant doing according to all that God has commanded by keeping His statutes and rules, (2Ch 7:17). From a Bible account we acquainted ourselves with many faithful people from whom we learned how a servant of the Lord can please God. We learned from Abel and Seth, sons of Adam, Noah, the Patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets, and in the last days from the embodied God, Jesus Christ who served the Father. With regards to us, the people of the New Covenant, the term also includes certain commands and regulations. For example, we are commanded to set apart a certain day for

worshipping the Lord and are gathered on that day, (Heb 4:9). We are commanded to spread the Good News among nations, (Mat 28:19). We are commanded to love Jesus and our brothers and sisters in Christ, (Mat 10:37; John 14:15; 15:12). Also, through the Apostles, we receive another couple of commandments from Jesus. First, to be honest and work with our own hands so that we may have something to share with anyone in need, (Eph 4:28); and second, to support the church, ( 2Co 9:1-15).

\* Significantly, none of the people of faith were perfect, but in spite of this they pleased the Holy One of Israel who is the Lord of both, the Old and the New Covenant, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, (Luk 1:43; Act 2:34). Therefore, the OT and the NT communities of believers acknowledged the Lord as their God and have kept the Covenant with him.

\* Finally, I borrowed the last thought. It is associated with (Eph 5:21-31), our epistle reading for today. On this occasion the similarity between the OT and NT communities came to an end; now let's see a big difference. Unlike the people of the Old Covenant, who have been abandoned by the Lord for their disobedience, the people of the New Covenant became the recipients of the promises given to Abraham. They are accepted, not by virtue of their obedience but by virtue of God's steadfast love for them. In order to make us holy the Holy One died on the cross and made us participants of the New Covenant in his blood. By this almighty act he set us free from every kind of lawlessness and purified us for himself as people who are truly his, who are eager to do good, (Tit 2:14).

\* Friends, while I counted the ideas we have discussed I came up with the last one of all. As I said before, we are not able to generate the new thoughts as the geniuses do, but we are given to distinguish the bad ones from the real good one, (Joh 10:4) and keep those that are good.

Friends, I tell you secretly, not all geniuses are able to understand God's mighty acts and acknowledge him as their God. Not all of them decide to serve God. Unlike many geniuses, we were given to believe that Jesus is the Holy One of God and believing in him we are given to be his servants. For these beliefs and privileges let's say to him, Thank You!!! dear Jesus.

Beloved, the grace of the Lord be with you always in the very acts of your obedience to the Holy One of Israel.

Amen