On Being Double-minded

Two men who lived in a small village
   Got into a terrible dispute
   They could not resolve.

So they went to the village chief.

The first man went to the chief
   And told his version of what happened.

When he finished, the chief said
   "You're absolutely right."

The second man, then, called on the chief
   And told his side of the story.

The chief responded, "You're absolutely right."

Afterward, the chief's wife scolded her husband.

"Those men told you two different stories
   And you told them they were absolutely right."

“It’s impossible they’re both absolutely right."

To which the chief replied,
   You're absolutely right!

James, in our first scripture lesson,
   Describes a double-minded person

As one who is tossed around like a wave by the wind.
   Unstable in all ways.

I learned that this word “double-minded”
   Was actually coined by James, the brother of Jesus
On Being Double-minded

The word in Greek is “dipsychos,”

It appears in the Bible only twice
   And only in James,
       Here in 1:8 and again in 4:8.

By definition, a double-minded person is at odds
   In his thoughts, his actions, and his behavior.

He or she is like a weathervane
   Pointing in whichever direction
       Even the slightest breeze turns it.

He or she is conflicted
   As to whom or what deserves their allegiances.

They are whimsical and easily persuaded.

They’ll follow a crowd because they want to belong
   Even if it goes against their better judgment.

They will compartmentalize their beliefs and actions
   According to what best suits
       Their selfish desires and sinful tendencies.

We see this kind of behavior today
   As did James during his time
       As did Joshua with the people of Israel.

~~
Our Old Testament passage,
   Holds one of the most treasured verses in the OT.
On Being Double-minded

It’s the kind of verse Christian book stores
Inscribe on refrigerator magnets.

It’s found here in verse 15:

Choose this day, whom you will serve . . . .
As for me and my house,
We will serve the Lord.

My Grandfather Whitten
Was an ordained minister in this district
For over 60 years.

I keep a shoebox full of his sermons in the pastor’s study.

I look through them on occasion
To see what Gramps might have thought
On any given subject.

This passage seems to have been
My Grandfather “signature” Bible verse
A perfect 3-point-sermon:
1. Choose
2. This day
3. Whom you will serve.

He preached from this passage several times
At the Saunders Grove,
Jeters Chapel,
And Terrace View congregations.

~~
The passage is taken from the last chapter
Of the book of Joshua.

It is Joshua’s farewell sermon.
And in his sermon
He recounts God’s mighty acts of deliverance!

Joshua begins all the way back
To Abraham’s journey from Ur
To the land of Canaan.

He lists the patriarchs of the faith; Isaac and Jacob.

He describes the story of Moses and Aaron in Egypt
And of their escape through the Red Sea.

He ends his account with the events
Leading up to the surrender of the city of Jericho
And entrance into the Promised Land.

Joshua reminds the Israelites
That this was God’s doing . . . not theirs!

And then he turns to the people of Israel
And he challenges them

To serve the LORD in sincerity and faithfulness
To do away with things that detract and distract.

But . . . he says, if serving the LORD is undesirable
Choose today whom you will serve!

~~
God’s church struggles with similar issues.

There is a double-minded standard in church today.

What should come first in life?
On Being Double-minded

Our country?
  Our family?
  Our occupation?
  Our political affiliation?

When it’s convenient
  When we have time
    When it’s on our terms
      When it makes us feel good

When it might better serve our purposes
  We might seek to serve the Lord.

We declare we serve God in sincerity and faithfulness,
  But you know . . . it’s just not going to work today . . .
Today, we have something else planned.
~~
Double-mindedness divides the heart.

A part of the heart seeks to serve God
  While the other part seeks to serve self.

When you divide the heart what do you?
  Half-heartedness!

God has something to say about that!
~~
For example
  Later in the history of Israel
    Elijah gives the people of Israel the same ultimatum:

It occurs during the showdown between the priests of Baal
  And Elijah the spokesperson for God.
On Being Double-minded

1 Kings 18:21 *How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people did not answer him a word.*

Half-heartedness or double-mindedness,
   Either way you look at it,
   It’s all the same!

Jesus has something to say about double-mindedness too
   In the Sermon on the Mount:

*Matthew 7:24* *No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.*

And again in *Matthew 12:30*:

*Matthew 12:30* *Whoever is not with me is against me* . . . .
   For Jesus, it’s an either or.

Back in our OT lesson today
   The Israelites stand at the brink of God’s fulfillment
   And God tells them to make a choice.

In their impatience, their need for instant gratification
   Their insatiable greed
   They have become double minded and half-hearted.

And Joshua asks, “What’ll it be folks?”

Following Jesus is an all or nothing kind of thing.

It’s not something you do on Sunday morning
On Being Double-minded

And then concentrate on something else
The rest of the week.

It’s a 24/7 sort of thing.

God demands single mindedness
Anything less is not enough.

The great preacher Haddon Robinson once said,
“You will invest your life in something,
Or you will throw it away on nothing.”

Joshua strikes at the heart of the issue
With his timeless truth
The choice is ultimately ours.

How will we choose to live our lives?
~~
One day a man was asked,
If he thought ignorance and complacency,
Played a part in the demise of Christianity.

And he answered, “don’t know and don’t care.”

Speaking of not caring
I still can’t figure out why the first lady
Chose to wear what she wore to Texas.
~~
To be sure the world sees Christianity’s
Double-mindedness and half-heartedness!

And if actions speak louder than words,
Than the world can read us like a book.

In the book by Philip Yancey,
On Being Double-minded


Yancey writes:

Unless Christians demonstrate truth with our lives, what we say about what we believe will sound like empty advertising slogans ... When a poll of college students asked, "Write the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word ‘Christianity,’" the most common answer was, "People who don't practice what they preach."

Other comments from various studies and polls
Reveal much the same:

A common description of Christians are
That they lead a double-standard life.

What they believe and how they behave incongruous.
~~
It doesn’t have to be that way!

Yes, we’re sinners in constant need of God’s grace.
Yes, we’re constantly making terrible choices.

But the Bible’s contention is that
With the help of God’s Holy Spirit
We CAN CHOOSE to become better people!
~~
Billy Graham once said, the strongest principle of life and blessings lies in our choice. Our life is the sum result of all the choices we make, both consciously and unconsciously.

Look at it this way . . .
On Being Double-minded

And if you don’t take anything else away
From today’s sermon . . . remember this:

_We make choices . . . and those choices make us!_

What we’re talking about here is living a life of integrity.

Choose to integrate your belief in Jesus
Into a lifestyle compatible with the way of Jesus!

Everything you say, everything you do
Is a result of a choice
Whether it’s done consciously or unconsciously.

Everything you say, everything you do
Moves you in one of two directions
Either towards or away from God.

Moses in Deuteronomy says it this way:

_Deuteronomy 30:19-20a This day I call heaven and earth as witness against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life . . . ._

Your choice
Your life
Your destiny

Which will it be?

As for me and my house . . . we will serve the Lord!!