

2017 - the Year When We Decide

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of making a decision in 2017 to choose between continuing on a path of self-seeking and godlessness or returning to one's original values and purpose.

Duration: 36:55

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:16-19

Topics: "Decision"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for the Church of Jesus Christ to return to its purpose and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit. He challenges believers to make a decision in 2017 to be the people of God and believe that they can make a difference. The preacher warns against being involved in sinful pursuits, such as pornography, and encourages individuals to trust in God's power to turn away from these wrong paths. He also highlights the tragedy of the Church being mixed with worldly ways and urges believers to have biblical thinking and live in obedience to God. Throughout the sermon, the preacher references biblical passages, such as Proverbs and the promises of God to guide, protect, and bless His people.

Transcript

If you'll turn your Bibles please to the book of 1st Kings chapter 18, or your tablet or your cell phone, whatever device you have. There are not too many hard copy Bibles left anymore. 2017, the year when we decide.

2017, that's the title of my message, the year when we decide. Now Father, God, I have no other desire in my life than to honor you, Jesus. I have no other reason to be in this or any other pulpit, but that your name should be lifted up, your will be done, your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.

I ask you Father, in Jesus name, for the anointing of your Holy Spirit to rest powerfully on your word. God, I ask you Lord, to speak to our hearts, beginning with mine, every one of us that are here today, about this moment in history, about the future, and what part perhaps you would have us play in it. Give us grace, oh God, not to push away your word, but to embrace your word, embrace your will, embrace your mercy, your cleansing, your cross, everything Lord, that you came and died to give us.

I thank you Lord, for taking this frail body, for overriding my weakness, and letting your strength be made known. Give me the grace to disappear Lord, that you may appear. Let it be you speaking to your people.

This is your church Lord, it belongs to no one but you. These are your people, you died for them, and so I'm inviting you, Holy Spirit, to speak to your church, and I thank you for it, in Jesus name. First Kings chapter 18, verses 20 and 21.

So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, how long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him, but if Baal, follow him. But the people answered him, not a word.

2017 appears to be the year when this nation will begin its decision of what kind of a country you and I are going to leave behind for our children. Just like with our opening text, the nation itself is now faltering between two opinions, divided almost equally. One half of society wanted to continue this headlong plunge into further self-seeking and godlessness.

The other, potentially returned to the values which many believe that in spite of our faults, made us a nation which became the envy of the modern world. A lot of people want to return to something, but they're not quite sure what that something is that they want to return to. And while this social discourse is playing itself out in the next year or two, what you and I choose to do now can actually tip the scales one way or another.

We have a lot more influence than you realize we do. You do, I do. Believers in Jesus Christ, we can move the hand of God.

We can change the destiny of this nation if we are smart enough to realize the place that God has placed us in. But in our opening text, the people of God in a moment very similar to ours had become distracted from their calling. They've been given a specific calling just as you and I have in the earth.

They were the descendants of Abraham. Just as Paul says in the New Testament, he is the father of faith. He is the one, he is the example.

He is the one who set in motion everything throughout history that resulted in the nation of Israel being born and the Messiah, our savior being born in the midst of that nation. He is our example. Now the Lord said to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, let me just read it to you.

Verse one, get out of your country from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you and I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Of course, this is where you and I come in.

God for knowing the future is speaking about us being here today and those who will come after us and those who came before us as the church of Jesus Christ. This is the way that the families of the earth have been blessed. He promised Abraham, he said, I'm going to lead you to a place that is unique to the calling and purpose that's on your life.

I will take you from where you are and I will take you to a land that I will show you. And this is a similar calling that God places on each one of our lives. He takes us from a place that we once occupied a way of thinking life practices.

And he says, I'm going to take you now from this place. Even if it was a good place, there's nothing in the Bible that says where he lived was a bad place. It was just a place that was short of what God had for his life.

You might be living in a place. It's not a bad place today, but I want to ask you the question. Is it the fullness of what God has for you? The value system, the things you're embracing, what you're spending your day occupied with from morning to evening.

And he said, I'm going to take you to a place and it's a place that is unique to you. There's a place that God has for me in his body. And to be a testimony to him on the earth, just as there's a place that God has for you individually, not, not just collectively as a church, it, it can be easy to blend into a large church body like this, be completely outside of what God has for your life.

But, but it looks to be that you're with the program because you're with so many other voices, all blended in and all mixed in. But I want to remind you that God's eye is focused on you. You, he has a calling on your life.

He has a place that's unique to you that he's trying to draw you to, especially now in this time in which we're living. And verse two, he says, I'll make you a great nation. I'll bless you, make your name great, and you shall be a blessing.

In other words, I'm going to increase you there. I'm going to give you a reputation that is directly attributable to me. That is God.

You're going to become a source through whom God would show his kingdom to those who don't yet know him. I'm going to do something in your life that will bring my name to reputation. That's what God says.

You can't do it. None of us can. But if you're willing to go to that place, God says, I'm going to do something so powerful in you that people who once knew you are going to scratch their heads and say, how did this man or woman, what happened to you? How did you change? And your answer can only be God took me from where I was and brought me to the place that I now am.

And he's given me all that I now possess. And he's also given me hope for what I will be in the future. Like the apostle Paul, I've not attained the fullness of what God has for me in this world, but I'm leaving behind what needs to be left behind.

And I'm pressing forward to that mark of the high calling of God on my life in Christ Jesus. He says, I will bless those who bless you and curse him who curses you. And then you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

You're going to be uniquely guided. You're going to be protected as you live to see the blessing of God extended throughout this world. I will guide you.

I will keep you. There will be things sent against you to destroy you. You won't even realize that I protected you until you get to heaven and see your life in retrospect.

I will guide you. I will keep you. I will bless.

I've always believed no matter how dangerous the circumstance may be. And we've gone into some dangerous places throughout the world. I've always believed that I am until God says, I'm not, I'm not in the hands of anyone, but the hands of God.

Praise be to God. Now, by the time of Elijah's question in our opening text, not all, but most of the people of God of that generation had become diverted from their calling. The Bible tells us that there were 7,001.

If you include Elijah who had not bent their knee to the spirit of the age that had gotten into the fabric of the people of God, they were instead of turning outward, the blessing of God had turned them inward. It had closed their ears to the cries of those who were living without hope and had opened their ears to the false religious voices that were leading them deeper and deeper into error. And I want you just to listen to these words given by God to Solomon about the seductive power of religion, especially when religion becomes mixed in with sin, when religion offers a cheap grace that is not in the Bible and says, you can do this and heaven will still be your home.

You can do this and you'll still be accepted with God. You can willfully continue to participate in something that God says is forbidden. Chapter 7, verse 6, for at the window of my house, I looked through my lattice and saw among the simple.

I perceived among the youths, a young man, devoid of understanding passing along the street near her corner. And he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him with the attire of a harlot and a crafty heart.

She was loud and rebellious. Her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside at times in the open square lurking at every corner.

So she caught him and kissed him. And with an impudent, shameless face, she said to him, I have peace offerings with me today. I have paid my vows.

In other words, you can worship God where I am. You can have me. You can have seductive pleasure and you can have God too in the place where I dwell.

I offer you a grace that allows you to sin against the good man of the house. And she goes on, she said, so I came out to meet you diligently to seek your face and I found you and I've spread my bed with tapestry and colored carvings of Egyptian linen. I perfumed my bed with myrrh and aloes and cinnamon.

Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning. Let us delight ourselves with love for my husband is not at home. He's gone on a long journey.

In other words, there's time to get right with God. He's not coming soon. You're not going to stand before him tomorrow.

So why don't you just enjoy this pleasure of sin for just a season? And then you might know it's wrong. You might know it's deficient or you might realize it's leaving you short of what God has for your life, but you've got time. He's not coming home.

He's not coming back soon. He's gone on a long journey. So come worship with me in this place of compromise.

Worship in this place where you can have sin and salvation at the same time. It smells good here. It looks good here.

There are peace offerings being offered here. This is a good place. Come, she said to this young man who was void of understanding.

The master has taken a bag of money and he will come home on an appointed day. And with her enticing speech, she caused him to yield. And with her flattering lips, she seduced him.

Her flattering lips. That's how you can always identify a false prophet is by flattery. I want you to put that one in your wallet and hang on to it.

They will always tell you how wonderful you are. They will flatter you. And with her flattering lips, she seduced him.

And immediately he went after her as an ox goes to the slaughter or as a fool to the correction of the stocks till an arrow struck his liver. And as a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know that it would cost him his life. He had no idea that what he was involved in not only threatened his eternity with God, but it threatened to take away the life that God had promised to give him here on this side of eternity.

It's such a tragedy when the church of Jesus Christ begins to be mixed with that which God says we ought not to do. Such a tragedy when people come into the house of God, living in sexual sin, thinking there's no consequence to it. Such a tragedy when God's own people become so immersed in the ways of this world that their thinking is no longer biblical thinking.

They've embraced the value system of a fallen society and out of their mouth comes blessing and cursing at the same time when the apostle James said, these things ought not to be such a tragedy. When God's people come into his house, filled with bitterness, filled with unforgiveness, somehow thinking that this is admissible to the kingdom of heaven, somehow thinking that there's no cost for this. Even though Jesus himself said, if you do not forgive men, their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive your trespasses.

Such a tragedy to be seduced, especially even in the house of God with flattering words that allow people to believe that you can steal in the workplace and somehow heaven is still going to be your home. Even though revelation tells us clearly every thief dwells outside the city of God. He didn't know it was for his life.

Jesus said these words in Matthew chapter 11 verses 16 to 19. Now listen to what he said, but to what shall I like in this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to their companions and saying, we played the flute for you and you did not dance. We moored to you and you did not lament for John came neither eating nor drinking.

And they say he has a demon. The son of man came eating and drinking and they say, look, a glutton and a wine bibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

And here's what Jesus was saying in his particular time. Again, it repeats itself throughout history. The people of God were so diverted that even though God was calling them to something deeper, they couldn't hear his voice anymore.

And he says, what will I like in this generation to, he said, even if I mourn, even if I, I show you the, the pathos in my heart, in a sense that the passion in my heart for those that are going to go into an eternity called hell and suffered the wrath of God and be distant from God for all of eternity. If even if I approach you with sorrow or I pipe, he says in dance, and I call you telling you, you can have an abundant life, a joy filled life. You can rejoice with the angels over one sinner that repents.

When I try to move you, no matter how I speak, you won't move. Whether I yell at you, repent as John the Baptist did, or sit down with you where you're eating and drinking and fellowship with you. I still can't get you to move.

That's what he was saying. I can't get you to move from where you are to your purpose on the earth, to be a people separated unto God, to be a holy people, a peculiar people, a people sovereignly given the power of God by the Holy spirit to say no to sin and yes, to the will of God and the ways of God, a people divinely empowered to be a difference, a not just a voice, but a force in society for good people who can tip the scales in this time of indecision in society to the direction of that which is godly and good and holy. But we can't tip the scales if we're intermixed with the ways of this world.

How many people today will not leave where they are to embrace and become what God has called them to be. They choose sin over surrender. They become easy prey for a superficial, seductive, false grace.

That's what it is. A false grace. Better you hear now the words of the apostle Paul when he said, be not deceived.

No fornicator, no idolater, no immoral person, no drunkard, no reveler, no reviler, no thief, no liar has any inheritance in the kingdom of heaven or of God. Be not deceived by any message of cheap grace. Folks.

If you end up in hell, your blood is not on my hands. I'm telling you right now, I am speaking the heart of God to you. Is it worth it? Is it worth it to live a mixture? Is it worth it? You know, it's so ironic.

Elijah was a man of God and the people of his generation knew it. And he had brought about this confrontation on the top of Mount Carmel between the false, seductive spirits that were leading the people of God away from their purpose on the earth. And they had their altar.

They had their altar. It was a, it was a pleasurable altar. It was an filled with passionate, well-meaning people, but they were wrong.

It was deficient. It was pleasurable, but it was powerless. And if you're in the wrong religion, I'll tell you right now, if you're in a wrong pursuit of Christ, it can be extremely pleasurable, but it is extremely powerless as well.

2017 is the day when we decide what we're going to be as a people. Not just Times Square church, but the church of Jesus Christ throughout this nation. We'll have to decide what we're going to be.

Are we going to be the people of God? Are we going to return to our purpose? Are we going to trust the Holy spirit to make us into what we could never hope to be in ourselves? Are we going to believe that we can make a difference? Are we going to trust God for the power to turn away from everything that we know is wrong? Don't tell me if you're stuck on pornography, don't tell me you can't get rid of that laptop. Don't tell me you can't put that screen away. You trust God for the power and do what you have to do.

Do what you have to do. Don't tell me you can't forgive. You can write a letter.

You can write a card. You can arrange a meeting and you can simply do it by faith. If you can't do it any other way, maybe you too have embraced a level of worship, which is leaving you far away from where you should be.

God forbid, God forbid. I would not want to be here. I'd not want to be in any church and end up less than what God has called me to be.

What would be the point of it all? It's just the ultimate delusion. No, I'm called, you're called to be a peculiar people on the earth, called out of darkness and into the marvelous light of God. We're called to bring this message of freedom.

The one who stood in a pulp and said, the spirit of the Lord is upon me to bring good tidings to the poor, to set free the captive, to heal the broken in heart, to give vision to those who can't see a way forward. The spirit of God is upon me for this reason. Again, in first Kings chapter 18, where we started, Elijah built another altar.

I'm not going to go into all the details of that altar, but everything he did was symbolic, bringing the people of God back to their intended purpose, bringing them back into unity with God and one another, bringing them back into not using a sacrifice that was on that altar for themselves and their own gain, but understanding that that altar of worship meant that we are to be given so that others in this world can be blessed through us. Not that we just gathered there to be blessed, but the blessing has a purpose. Yes, I'm blessed folks.

I'm blessed. I'm blessed by, by God's grace. I have a new heart by God's grace.

I have a new mind by God's grace. I have a new home by God's grace. I have a new marriage.

By God's grace. I have a new song by God's grace. I have new strength.

I've new vision new passion by God's grace, but it's not for me. I get to experience it, but it's for others. That God blesses as with Abraham the design of God's blessing in my life Is that others throughout this world might be blessed that those who don't have hope might know they can have hope The doze who live in darkness might see that those who are wounded might be healed that those who are in prison might be set Free that is the purpose of God's blessing in my life Elijah built this other altar And the people had been diverted for so long they didn't even know they were diverted They didn't even realize that the purpose on the earth was being lost right before their eyes but Elijah Prayed after he built that altar and said hear me Oh Lord hear me that this people may know that you are the Lord God and you've turned their hearts back to you again then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice the wood the stones and the Dust and it licked up the water that was in the trench and when all the people saw it they fell on their faces And they said the Lord he is God the Lord he is God and Here's what it means when they turn once again to consider that place to which God was calling them They found that God was willing to make his power known to them once again That's the cry of my heart now Oh God Let your power be made known to us again Let your power be made known in us again I'm praying personally for a fresh baptism of God's Holy Spirit fresh touch from heaven I'm praying that God do something in my life new Fresh more powerful that he would lead me deeper into his will for my life at this season And that's my prayer for you That's my prayer for this church.

That's my prayer for us collectively as a body But it's also my prayer for you individually every soul every man every woman every child every young person If we're going to make a difference now at this critical moment in the history of this nation. I Feel the same way that Moses must have felt and at times others in the Old Testament when they simply drew a line in the sand and said who is on the Lord's side if God be God follow him Elijah said and the but the people stood there and answered him not a word but suddenly something sparked in their hearts is when they saw the power of God when they Rediscovered their purpose when they they saw how powerless the place they were worshiping in in their hearts actually was Then they fell on their faces When they saw that God was willing to be merciful God is willing to send another Pentecost. God is willing to raise up another generation God is willing to put power in our prayers again.

God is willing to bring our children back home God is willing to give us the courage to stand in the marketplace and declare who he is to this generation God is willing to stretch his hand out and heal those that are sick God is willing to cause devils to flee one more time in this generation When they saw it when they saw it when they finally understood again What my purpose is on the earth they fell on their faces and said the Lord he is God there is no other God We can't create a secondary God. We can't substitute another Jesus for the one of the Bible We can't create another level of service than the cross and the call of the cross That God places on each of our lives to win our generation for him If we are going to make a difference Church of Jesus Christ hear me on this if we're going to make a difference We have to leave this lethargy and get back to the cross of Jesus Christ and say these simple words The Apostle Paul said when he met it Christ face to face on the Damascus Road Lord God, what would you have me to do? What kind of a person would you have me to be I know for sure he would have you walk away from sin That's where it all begins We've got prayer requests in this church From people who attend this church have been stuck in pornography for years who are still drinking still going to clubs still living in adultery Still in immorality Doing going saying things that you know are wrong I'm not upset with you. I'm fighting for you.

Do you understand that? I'm fighting for you for your soul for the testimony of God in your life If I flattered you in your sin, then I would be a false shepherd to you False shepherds don't care where you end up in eternity as long as you fill their seats and fill their coffers They don't care where you end up. They'll tell you whatever you want to hear as long as you give them a reputation I Care I care I care that you're at the throne of God. I Want to see you there This life as we know it will soon be over the way the world is going right now.

It could be over sooner than later as well It'll soon be over and I will be there. I want to see you there At the throne of God on the right side of the throne of God Because you chose in 2017 you just simply said I choose Jesus I Choose to walk away from wrong. I choose to embrace the will of God I choose to trust God for the strength to be the person that God is calling me to be I choose Christ in 2017 I Choose to be a person who's going to make a difference in my workplace My family my community because I'm going to live a holy life as God Allows me to and enables me to I choose to speak right Think right live right.

I choose to open the Bible and begin to study it and learn it so that I'd be a workman Who's not ashamed? When my enemy comes against me, I choose to pray what everyone else chooses to play. I Choose to live for the kingdom of God Because the Lord is God The Lord is God and he promises to give me the power that I need To be the man to be the woman that God has called me to be praise be to God I can't choose for you and Because you belong to a corporate church that is excited about God does not mean that you have chosen The way of right it's an individual choice. It will reflect itself collectively eventually,

but it still is an individual choice But I tell you if you want to know joy If you want to know power if you want to know purpose if you want to really understand What a Christian destiny should look like It's time For all of us to fall on our faces one more time Say the Lord is God you have the right to my life Jesus You have the right to my future.

You have the right to my heart You have the right to tell me what is right and what is wrong? I don't have the right to dictate it to you You have the right to lead me to a place where I know I'm sitting in your presence God Almighty God Almighty 2017 is the year that I choose You Jesus I choose you I Choose to let my life be lined up with truth If that's the cry of your heart I Know it is the cry of mine If that's the cry of your heart And you already know what you need strength remember the two sides of an awakening it begins with repentance and Then it moves to an embracing of the will of God You can't move to embracing God's will until you've dealt with what's keeping you from at first Trust God for the strength To turn away from what you need to turn away from trust God for the strength you don't have to live in defeat anymore Trust him for the strength trust him for the strength To be a man or woman of God He will not fail you or forsake you The power of God will be yours again We're gonna stand in just a moment in North Jersey in the education annex and those at home You could stand up just in front of the screen if you will But if in your heart If in your heart you can say God in 2017 I'm in I choose I Choose the will and the way of God for my life. I choose it I Choose it wholeheartedly. I Choose it with knowledge.

I Choose it with understanding the my purpose on the earth. I choose it Knowing that my life can make a difference it can actually tip the scale in this time of Deliberation in my country. I choose to live for Jesus a father.

I thank you God. I Know in my heart. I've delivered your heart And so Lord, let me be the first at this altar this morning God I choose to let you guide my life I Choose to let you tell me when I'm doing something whether it's good or whether it's evil.

I Choose to let you guide me and guard me in the days ahead and bring me to a place Where my life is a blessing for other people What I choose to honor you by letting you live your life inside of mine And give me the strength that I need to be a voice for you. I Thank you with all my heart in Jesus name We're going to stand in just a moment and for everyone who just can say good. That's my heart as well I want you just to join with me at the front here.

We're gonna pray in just a moment Slip out of your seat. Let's stand you go in the balcony either exit the main sanctuary Just come join with me at this altar and then we're gonna pray in just a moment. I'm gonna ask you just to Can ask you just to pray this prayer with me now those that I've gathered here at this altar and those who know in your heart You're still in your seat, but you know, you need to pray this Lord Jesus Christ Give me the power To turn from sin and to live a good life and a clean life That will bring honor to your name And open before me a Doorway Into your power Where my life can become a blessing For somebody else Deliver me from selfishness Deliver me for trying to use the gospel Simply for my own benefit Deliver me from false voices That will try to lead me astray From the simplicity of Christ Give me grace to lay hold of your purpose and Your power and your provision for my future I Ask you Lord God To use my life To make a difference For the future of many people Let my life count For your kingdom and for your glory.

I yield my body to you My future to you To use me as you will Whatever your plan is Let that become my plan. I Thank you for mercy For hope and for a doorway into life in 2017 Thank you that you are still willing

To send your power Upon me as I turn towards you God I thank you With all my heart For the difference
That my life will make this coming year Oh Jesus Be glorified Fill my mouth with new songs of worship joy
and strength as I choose to Serve you And I thank you for it with all my heart in Jesus name Hallelujah,
hallelujah

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