

Sunday, November 12, 2023

Scripture Reading: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

Don't live your life regretting yesterday. Live your life so tomorrow you won't regret today.
—Catherine Pulsifer

As senior citizens, it's natural that we spend time looking back over the events of our lives—good or bad. It's not that we're "living in the past," as many accuse us. It's rather that memories warm us up inside; nostalgia feels good.

As for the sad things, we don't dwell on them. As pastor Rick Warren said, "We are products of our past, but we don't need to be prisoners of it."

Still, as we consider the past, it is possible we might have regrets. When we make choices in life, many of them don't matter and are quickly forgotten. Chocolate or strawberry? Red or blue? Cotton or nylon? Earth tones or neon? Jane Austen or Thomas Hardy? Beethoven or Mozart? Apple or PC?

When AARP took a survey, however, of what seniors most regretted about the choices they made in the past, they narrowed the many responses to five. See if any of these resonant with you. The top five—

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.
2. I wish I didn't work so hard.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.
4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.
5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

Does this list include some of your own regrets?

I ask, because our Bible reading today from Joshua 24 concerns an old man nearing the end of his life. In his youth, he had been a spy, scouting out the land of Canaan and reporting to Moses. Then he succeeded Moses and led the Israelites across the Jordan. He was the victor in the famous battle for Jericho when the "walls came a-tumblin' down."

I don't know if he had regrets. But in this reading, he challenges all of Israel to make a choice. If they made the right choice, they would never regret the choice they'd made. He said, "Choose this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (24:15).

The past cannot be changed. But your future can. It can be regret-free. Whom will you serve?

—Timothy Merrill

For the full AARP article, see Bronnie Ware, "5 Top Regrets of the Dying," aarp.org. [no date] Retrieved April 15, 2023.

Prayer: Lord, I have no other God but you. Today and for my remaining years, I choose you. Amen.