

Main Service pt. II

“Into the Land”

Joshua 1:1-9

- Illustration
 - No!
 - Don't touch that!
 - Shut the door!
 - Look both ways!
 - Gentle hands!
- These are some of the top things parents have to repeat to their children
 - Another one on repeat in our house is “USE YOUR WORDS!”
 - Our 2-year-old has this really cool habit of just screaming at the top of his lungs when he needs something.
 - But probably the most repeated phrase in the Corley household is: “I love you.”
 - We repeat these phrases in our house because:
 - They haven't learned them yet...
 - And because they are SUPER IMPORTANT...
 - ...especially the phrase “I love you.”
 - “No matter what...I love you.”

<<In our text today (Joshua 1), we are going to see a phrase repeated over and over again – multiple times>>

- Four times in the span of 18 verses, this phrase: “*be strong and courageous*” will surface.
 - Four times will Joshua be told “*be strong and courageous.*”
 - In fact, just 5 chapters prior to this in Deuteronomy 31, Joshua has already heard this same phrase 3 times (31:6, 7, 23).
 - So, by the end of Joshua 1, he will have been told “*be strong and courageous*” SEVEN TIMES BY 3 DIFFERENT PEOPLE.
 - Once by Moses (Dt. 31:7)
 - 5 times by the LORD
 - And then once by the people of Israel (Joshua 1:18)
- For some reason or another, Joshua needs to be reminded to “*be strong and courageous*”...
 - ...and so do the people of Israel.
 - The first time this phrase is mentioned in all of Scripture, it is spoken to the entire nation of Israel – to all the people.
 - Deuteronomy 31:1 – “*So Moses continued to speak these words to all Israel.*”
 - Deuteronomy 31:6 – “*Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.*”
 - Joshua needs to be reminded...
 - The whole nation of Israel needs to be reminded...
 - And you need to be reminded...
 - ...to be “*strong and courageous.*”
- So, this morning, as we journey closer to the crossing into Canaan...
 - ...as we prepare to enter *into the land* (of 121 & MLK)...

- ...you must be strong and courageous.
 - So, let's read together Joshua 1

Joshua 1:1-6 – “After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, ² “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵ No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.”

- So, Moses breathes his last and – unlike Miriam – is given a proper 30-day mourning (Dt. 34:8).
 - And Joshua, son of Nun, is handed the keys to the kingdom...
 - ...and he and all Israel – if they want to enter into the land – will need to be strong and courageous
 - ...and right off top (1:1) there is a brief glimpse into who Joshua is and what kind of leader he is.
 - 1:1 describes him as Moses’ “assistant”
 - Some translations may say servant but “assistant” seems to be the most accurate.
 - The Hebrew word actually makes allusions to him being a “attendant” to a master
 - The same word is used to describe Joseph’s service to Potiphar in Genesis 39:4
 - This is a lowly, seemingly un-esteemed role and it is a feature that describes Joshua well: humility.
 - If Israel is going to enter into the land, they (and especially their leader) will need humility.
 - <pause>
 - So will you.
 - You must be strong and take courage and be in the...

1. Proper place

- ...The place of humility and lowliness
 - ...it means taking your seat in the lowest place (more to come on this in a sec)
- If you follow the flow of the first verse:
 - Moses is the Lord’s servant...
 - And Joshua is Moses’ assistant...
 - Joshua, then, is the servant’s assistant.
 - He, like Dwight Schrute, is the lowly “Assistant to the Regional Manager”
 - He gets not glory and no accolades...
 - ...and this is precisely the type of person God is looking for...
 - ...one who is content with the lowest place.
 - AND!...this is precisely the reason – as we learned last week – Moses was not permitted entry into the land...
 - ...because of his desire for glory.
 - The LORD placed a leader over Israel who was content not being seen or noticed.

- Did you know that Joshua was there with Moses when he went up on the mountain to get the 10 commandments from God?
 - Exodus 24:13
 - I literally didn't know that until this past week when I was studying.
- Also, do you remember the story of Israel defeating the Amalekites?
 - In Exodus 17, Israel defeats the Amalekites because Moses lifted up his hands.
 - When Moses would lift up his hands, Israel would prevail...
 - When Moses lowered his hands, Amalek would prevail...
 - That's the main narrative of the story.
 - However, did you know who was doing the actual fighting?
 - Joshua.
- And there are many other major moments in Moses's time where Joshua is there playing a pivotal role...
 - ...yet he never gets the attention or the glory
- It seems as though he is content with not being seen or noticed...
 - ...he is strong and courageous...
 - ...he has humility...
 - ...and he postures himself in the proper place
- I challenge our college students with this regularly:
 - What if...
 - ...instead of making social media posts that draw attention to yourselves...
 - ...instead of regularly referring to yourself in conversation...
 - ...instead of seeking positions and places where you are noticed...
 - ...what if you intentionally pursued places where you wouldn't be noticed?
- This – in fact – isn't just a challenge or a suggestion.
 - Jesus commands this in a parable:
 - Luke 14:8-11 – *“⁸ ‘When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*
 - Jesus directs the disciples downward into humility...
 - He tells them to assume the lowest place.
- Be strong and courageous and have humility.
 - If you want to enter into the land...
 - If First Belton is going to successfully enter into the land...
 - You need to hear this and know this:
 - IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.
 - STOP MAKING IT ABOUT YOU.
 - *Philippians 2:3 – “Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”*
 - Do you know which “others” are overwhelmingly deemed “more significant” throughout the Old Testament?
 - Future generations.
 - Read with me in 1:6:

- Joshua 1:6 – “*Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.*”

- “*Their fathers*” are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 - And God promises all 3 of them that their future generations will be blessed.
 - Speaking of things that are repeated to children...
 - ...God regularly repeats the importance of the following generations to his children.
- In fact, the word generation(s) appears 161 times in the OT...
- ...and this doesn't include the countless genealogies.
- Now, for sake of time I'm not going to cite all of them...
- ...but just to paint a picture of importance here are a few:
 - Leviticus 21:17 refers to the NEXT generation
 - Joshua 22:27 speaks of the generations “after us”
 - Exodus 34:7 speaks of the 3rd and 4th generations
 - Genesis 9:12 speaks of “successive” generations
 - Deuteronomy 23:2-3 speak of the 10th generation
 - Deuteronomy 7:9 speaks of the 1000th generation
 - And Genesis 17:7 speaks of an everlasting generation.
- Be strong and courageous and...

2. Preserve posterity

- Joshua is about to lead Israel into a land that was promised to them generations ago.
 - And, this land will remain with Israel for generations to come.
 - Joshua has a very good understanding of God's initiative to preserve posterity.
 - Joshua is commanded to “be strong and courageous” and secure safety and success for the future people of God.
 - And so are you.
 - So are you commanded to be strong and courageous and consider the next generation(s).
 - First Belton must be thinking of the generations to come.
 - And in many ways you are:
 - 83% of you are giving
 - A new building is being built
 - A number of you make food and bring it to college students each Sunday
 - A number of you serve in the college, student, and kids ministry
 - Some of you have gone on mission trips and spent a lot of time with the next generations on those trips
 - You've endured with this church through hard changes and have stuck with us.
 - In many ways, some you are thinking about the generations to come...
 - ...but there are some ways in which many of you are not:
 - Now, I am not going to give an elongated list and lecture you...
 - ...mainly because I don't think it is because you just don't care about the next generations (atleast I hope that's not the case)...
 - No, it's not because you don't care...
 - It's because you don't know how.
 - Or, you think you know when you really don't.

- Let me explain
- Tod Bolsinger, professor at Fuller seminary, says this:
 - *“The cultural advantage we experienced during the seventeen centuries of Christendom has almost completely dissipated. [The tools used] for the Christendom world are inadequate to this immensely challenging – transformation-demanding – moment in history...We are heading into uncharted territory and are given the charge to lead a mission where the future is nothing like the past.” -Tod Bolsinger, “Canoeing the Mountains”*
 - Like it or not, the future is technological and digital – and, scarily – artificial...
 - ...and the tools and tricks we’ve used in the past will not suffice.
 - If you are going to preserve posterity, you must be strong and take courage and enter into uncharted territory.
 - Illustration: Sacagawea
 - Tod Bolsinger wrote a book entitled “Canoeing the Mountains” where he tells about the expedition of Lewis and Clark to the uncharted West.
 - He says that their expedition was built on a completely false expectation:
 - That the unexplored west had the exact same geography as the east.
 - Continue illustration...

<<Lewis and Clark were able to chart the western United States only because a native of the land navigated them through>>

- Without the help of someone familiar with the territory, Lewis and Clark would have never made it.
- If you want to preserve posterity, you must listen to those who are familiar with the treacherous terrain of tomorrow.
- You can no longer assume that the tools and traditions of old will suffice for the up and coming technological generation.
 - Be strong and courageous...
 - Be humble...
 - ...and listen to the college student...
 - ...listen to the high schooler...
 - ...listen to the 4th grader...
 - ...listen to what they want and need...
 - ...and consider them as more significant than yourself.
 - <<pause>>
 - If you are going to enter into the land you must...
 - Be strong and courageous and be in the proper place
 - Be strong and courageous and preserve posterity
 - And, be strong and courageous and...

3. Practice pondering

- Specifically, practice meditating (the presence of God.)
 - Joshua 1:7-9 might be one of my favorite set of verses in all of scripture.
 - In fact, these were some of the very first verses I memorized as a young believer.
 - ...and they’ve been vital to my success.
 - Let’s read them together:

Joshua 1:7-9 – “⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

- The phrase, “be strong and courageous” occurs 16 times in scripture.
 - And only here, in 1:7, does it include the adverb “very”.
 - “Be strong and *VERY* courageous”
 - In addition, another word in 1:7 stands out: “only”
 - “*ONLY* be strong and very courageous...”
 - God, here, is saying:
 - “To go across the river into the land you are going to need to have a LOT of courage to do ONE very specific thing...”
 - “...there’s only ONE thing that I need you do to get ready to cross into Canaan and conquer.”
 - And, right here, if I was Joshua, here’s what I would be thinking:
 - Illustration: Rocky, strength training, “Let’s get down to business”
 - But this actually isn’t what God’s directive is at all.
 - No, God says “I want you to meditate on my words and my law.”
 - God says, “If you want to succeed and prosper and enter the land...”
 - (1:7) “Do not turn from the right or the left of my commands”
 - (1:8) “Do not let My words depart from your mouth”
 - (1:8) “Be careful to do according to all My law.”
 - And though these verses emphasize DOING and NOT DOING certain things...
 - ...there’s something that must happen before doing...
 - ...and it is embedded in the very heart and center of these verses (1:8)
 - Joshua 1:8 – “⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”
 - The conjunction “so that” is crucial here.
 - It makes the second part of this verse contingent on the first.
 - It says that if you want to have success and prosper you must be careful to do,
 - And if you want to be careful to do, something else must happen first:
 - meditate on the law day and night.
 - Therefore, and please don’t miss this, it isn’t the action or inaction of doing that produces success...
 - To prosper doesn’t mean to behave better...
 - No, to prosper means to meditate, to ponder, to reflect, to think of, to dwell on God’s law – specifically, God’s words.
 - Simply put, then: to prosper means to ponder
 - ...ponder day and night, meditate on His words...
 - For Joshua, the command was clear:
 - To conquer Canaan...
 - To enter into the land...

- You don't need physical training, you need spiritual thinking.
- For you, the command is clear:
 - To enter into the land...
 - To have success and prosper...
 - ...day and night you must be meditating, thinking about, pondering on His law and His word.
 - This is where we get our 21st century Christian phrase: quiet times.
 - Time that you are alone with God meditating on His word.
 - This should be a pillar and staple of every Christian's life...
 - ...regular, daily alone time with God pondering Him and His word.
 - *"For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success."*
 - <pause>
- God promised to give Israel land – the land of Canaan.
 - And 5 chapters from now (Joshua 6), He will fulfill that promise and bring them into the land.
 - But there's a problem: the land won't last long.
 - And not because God goes back on His promise
 - But because centuries later, Israel will rebel against the LORD, and they will be exiled from the land.
 - But there is another promise God makes in these verses:
 - Joshua 1:5 – *"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."*
 - Joshua 1:9b – *"Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*
 - God says, *"I will not leave you or forsake you and I will be with you wherever you go."*
- This is what will make the difference over time:
 - Not God's promised land...
 - ...but God's promised presence.
 - Be strong and courageous, God has...

4. Promised His Presence

- A new building isn't going to change things
 - I mean, some things will change, but it won't change the big things...
 - ...it won't produce heart change...
 - ...it won't change our city...
 - No, what will change things is the mighty presence of God.
- Illustration: Acts 4:13 – recognized as having been with Jesus

Close

Lectio Divina – Psalms 27:11-14

¹¹ *Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.*

¹² *Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen against me,*

and they breathe out violence.

¹³ *I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living!*

¹⁴ *Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!*



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