

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Vero Beach, Florida 32966
Rev. Dr. Les Koerselman
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Psalm 46

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Joshua 1:1-9

“After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, “Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. 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. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

“When Love Really Counts”

Dear friends in Christ, Him crucified and Him now glorified. The subject meditation today is taken from the book of Joshua 1:9, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

A five-year-old boy was desperately afraid of thunderstorms. His father had tried to calm and quiet him, but with the approaching roll of thunder the boy would become extremely anxious and would dive under the bed and hide in fear.

The father was so distressed with his boy's fear that he finally took him to his minister. The minister spoke to the little five-year old boy, told him how God rides on the wings of the storm and that there is nothing to fear in thunder or lightning. A week later there was an approaching storm and the little boy showed no signs of agitation. In fact it seemed as though he possessed a growing excitement as the storm neared. Finally the little boy ran upstairs and his father thought, "Oh no, here's a repeat of all the trauma the little boy has suffered." He opened the door only to find the boy standing in front of the window like this (arms stretched, posing). He said, "What in the world are you doing?" As the lightning flashed and the thunder peeled, the little boy cried out excitedly, "Dad isn't it wonderful? God's taking my picture!"

That story illustrates the fact that we can choose to live in fear or to live by faith. The hallmark of Christian maturity is learning to dispel our fears because we now choose to live by faith.

I can't help but sympathize with Joshua. What fear must have gripped his soul as he is asked to assume the mantle of responsibility for Moses! It is Joshua whom God has chosen to lead the people into the Promised Land. Remember his background. He emerges from the obscurity of slavery in Egypt. We know nothing about his childhood, but we do know that he was bred, born and reared in slavery. The first mention of his name appears some two months after the Israelites have marched into the wilderness. Freedom is theirs, but not without hardship or danger. The Israelites are confronted with the Amalekites, a fierce nomadic warlike tribe. They descend upon the Israelites believing they will be easy prey. It is Moses who says, "Joshua: take men, rise up and defend the people." Joshua's first military campaign is a shining success.

At Mount Sinai, again Joshua is mentioned in connection with Moses. Moses, Aaron and Joshua and the seventy elders alone are allowed to approach the holy mountain. All others will be struck dead.

The next mention of Joshua's name is as Moses descends the mountain with the stone tablets under his arm. It is Joshua who says, "I hear the sound of tumult in the company of God's people." Moses contradicts him saying, "It is not the sound of war but of play." Moses sees the people of Israel dancing about the golden calf and in anger shatters the stone tablets upon the ground.

Some months later the people of Israel are encamped at Kadesh Barnea preparing to enter the land of Canaan. Moses wisely selects one man from each of the twelve tribes. Joshua is selected from the tribe of Ephraim. They are told to go to spy out the land. They return some forty days later. The majority report is an evil report. "The cities are too large, they are well fortified. The men are giants. Why we seemed as grasshoppers in their sight. We are not able to go up and take this land." The majority report was doom and gloom. "We shall never occupy the land. It is too much for us."

But the minority report of two renders an entirely different report. In Numbers 14:4 we read, "They said to one another, let us go up and occupy this land for we are well able to take it." However, the Israelites side with the majority report. They said, "Let us choose a captain who will lead us back into the land of Egypt." So hostile is the environment that Aaron, Moses, Joshua and Caleb are nearly stoned by the mob of angry Israelites.

Joshua and Caleb seek to quell the uprising with these words, "The land which we went to spy out is an exceedingly good land flowing with milk and honey. Do not fear the people of this land for they are bread for us, their protection is removed from them and the Lord is with us." The anger of the Lord was kindled against the people of Israel. The ten spies who spoke against occupation are smitten with a plague and die. The Levites slay over 3000 for their unbelief and the rest of the people are sent packing into the wilderness. During the next 40 years of desert occupation, all the people over 20 who came up from the land of Egypt die in the wilderness except Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb. The Promised Land is taken from them and was given to the next generation.

Disbelief coupled with the lack of faith, always leads to disaster. In some quarters, I believe that we, as Americans, are courting disaster. The morality in this country is an abomination before the Lord. **If we do not return to the God of our Fathers and reclaim Christian values, we as a country and as a nation will surely forfeit the blessings of God.** The erosion of time honored Christian values has led to a state of sociological chaos and for many they are now in the wilderness of sin.

Ecologists continue to warn us of our casual and careless contamination of our drinking water. The poisoning and polluting of our ground water will be the water we must drink and in drinking this water, surely we shall die. Their warnings state that we cannot drink from the cesspool we have created. In like fashion, remember spiritual well being cannot grow from the seeds of self-interest, self-deception and self-gratification. The Christian Church in this country is now in the minority. As the minority we need to stand up and be counted as never before. Our voice needs to be heard by Congressmen, Senators, and our President. Friends, our testimony, believe me, will demand courage. It will demand energy and it will demand love.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said this: “Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone that will tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to the end requires some of the same courage which a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.” **We need brave men and women in the church today.** If love of God means anything at all and it surely ought to, then it means sacrifice and commitment. For the Christian the love of Christ is that which fuels the soul and fortifies the spirit.

Thomas A. Kempis, the theologian and mystic, said, “Love is a great thing. Yea it is a great and thorough good. By itself, it makes everything that is heavy light. It will not be kept back by anything low and mean. It desires to be free from all worldly affections and not to be entangled by any outward prosperity or by any adversary subdued. Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, and attempts what is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility. It is therefore able to undertake all things and it completes many things and warrants them to take effect when he who does not love would faint and lie down. Though weary, love is not tired. Though alarmed, it is not confounded; but as a living flame, it forces its way upward and securely passes through all. Love is active and sincere, courageous, patient, faithful, prudent and manly.” We need that kind of love in the church today!!

Joshua’s leadership was fortified by the very words of the living God. May your life be so fortified? God will protect you. God will provide for you. God will lead you. “As I was with your servant Moses, so shall I be with you.”

Regardless of the obstacles you face this week, believe and know that it is an opportunity from God. Claim what we read this morning from Joshua the first chapter the ninth verse, **“Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

Let us pray:

Savior, like a Shepard lead us, much we need Thy tender care and in Thy arms securely fold us. In these moments, O Father, strengthen your people for the living of these days. As we leave this place, go with us, guide us, direct us, empower us and love us. For it is in the name of Jesus we ask it. Amen.