

WELCOME 15 July 2018 – 8 Pentecost '18 B

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you all here this morning. Please stay with us for morning tea...you know that's going to be awesome.

At the post-game press Q & A the coach praises his team's win saying, "The boys gave 110% tonight!" What does that even mean? There's no such thing as 110%... 100% is all the percents there are... There isn't more than that... Except there is.

The word the Bible uses is "wholehearted". It means living with clarity & purpose & intentionality... It means you don't coast through life taking short-cuts or the cheap & easy route. Those who live "wholeheartedly" produce a wellspring of good for others without ever seeming to run dry

Those who practice "wholehearted living" focus all their energy & effort on the one thing that gives life vitality, resolve, resilience & strength in all circumstances... Wholehearted living above all else holds on to a deep abiding relationship with God the Father. Wholehearted living emerges out of that relationship with God & doggedly holds onto his promises to leave a lasting impact for generations to come.

Hebron still belongs to the descendants of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite because he wholeheartedly followed the Lord, the God of Israel.

You too can live wholeheartedly because Christ has promised his life will be lived through yours & sends his Spirit to live in you.

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We'll explore & experience that today...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, we praise you for the unreserved nature of your mercy and the expansive reach of your love. You have created all the people of the earth in your image and care for each one. Remind us this day of your call for us to be a blessing to all families of the earth, and illuminate the fears that make us unwilling to give our lives away and be the vessels of your blessing to those who live as strangers among us. Then eliminate those fears & make us obedient to you in all things. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

8 PENTECOST '18 B – COURAGEOUS FAITH: WHOLEHEARTED LIVING

JOSHUA 14:6-15

FAITH CHAT:

1. With what is your life filled at this time?
2. What promise of God would you like to claim in this season?

I've said for years that Caleb is my hero...all time hands down Biblical hero. I SAY it's because any person who says their life *BEGAN* when they were 40 & at 85 is still promising to kick butt & take names...full props/total respect...hits my "hero" button.

But let's drill into that some...not just alpha male chest thumping. Caleb, name/word, means something like "dog." Not that kind... *THIS KIND* of dog. Thank you. Who names their kid "Dog" knowing the word means "dog"? What's up w/ that? But even more...He is "son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite." Kenizzites are not Hebrews – not Israelites. When God called Abe/Sarah out from Ur of the Chaldeans into the land of Canaan he promised would eventually be theirs, the Kenizzites are part of the indigenous peoples already there. Somehow Caleb is adopted into the tribe of Judah (tribe of kings) & is henceforth part of Israel...leader in that tribe. *GOTTA SEE IT!*

A half-breed kid named "dog" has now been adopted into the promise of God to Abraham & his descendants. An outsider, maybe even rejected by his own family, is grafted into God's promise that would bless all the nations of the earth. Hidden in plain sight is a wonderful snapshot of the amazing grace of God. God takes outcasts & claims them as his own as part of his covenant people. Caleb is my hero... Why? Caleb is me...Caleb is you...Caleb is us.

Eph 2 (4-6) & (11-13) -*God is so rich in mercy, & he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ & seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies & not their hearts. In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, & you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God & without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. Caleb is my hero... Why? Caleb is me...Caleb is you...Caleb is us...An outsider grafted into God's promise that would bless all the nations of the earth.*

Watch what happens to this outsider adopted in grace for God's promise & purpose.

We first saw Caleb a few weeks ago Num 13 & 14 when Moses sent 12 spies into the Promised Land "See what the land is like, & find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected open camps? Is the soil fertile or poor? Are there many trees? Do your best to bring back samples of the crops you see."

They bring back this recon report: "We entered the land you sent us to explore, & it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk & honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. But the people living there are powerful, & their towns are large & fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak! ...We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" ...Next to them we felt like grasshoppers..." The Israelites collectively wet themselves

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" The final vote is Caleb & Joshua vs 10 voices of fear. 40 yrs later, after all but C/J die apart from the promise, Joshua leads the next/new generation into the land & for 5 yrs they fight under God's power & Joshua's leadership to claim their new home. Caleb has lived 45 years w/ 1 thing in mind: *Caleb said to Joshua, "Remember what the Lord said to Moses, the man of God, about you & me when we were at Kadesh-barnea. I was 40 years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me to explore the land of Canaan. I returned & gave an honest report, but my brothers frightened the people from entering the Promised Land. For my part, I **wholeheartedly** followed the Lord my God. So that day Moses solemnly promised me, 'The land of Canaan on which you walked will be your land & that of your descendants forever, because you **wholeheartedly** followed the Lord my God.'*

Wholeheartedly? What's that? How is Caleb different from all the others...even from Joshua? That word...that fixed attitude of his heart...The roots of *wholeheartedly* are found in hunting of all places. Think of a hunter stalking his prey & it's time to move in "close the gap" b/t hunter & target. Caleb lives to "close the gap" b/t his life & God's promise to "close the gap" b/t his heart & God's heart. Caleb lives so that the distance in his relationship w/ God is near 0...response time to God is immediate...

Key to wholehearted living: Caleb Lives on God time. He measures the real start of his life from the day he is commissioned by Moses to scout the Promised Land. Whatever has happened ^{b/4} that day...no longer his frame of reference. *I was 40 years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to explore the land of Canaan I returned & gave an honest report, but my brothers who went with me frightened the people from entering the Promised Land. For my part, I wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God.* Caleb measures his life according to the day the promise of God for his people became the promise of God for Caleb. 1 thing to be part of the people but to be part of the promise!

And...living on God time; his obedience is immediate. Num 13:30 - When the 10 start frightening the people w/ visions of giants, Caleb bursts in, "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" When it becomes clear the Israelites are looking for the road back to Egypt/slavery Caleb & Joshua make a last-ditch plea: Num 14:9 - *Do not rebel against the Lord, & don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the Lord is with us! Don't be afraid of them!*" Caleb is living on God time... His faith/life are grounded in the rock of an unbreakable promise, made by a faithful God. Over/over, Caleb states his confidence in God & his firm conviction about God's Word.

But John you said Caleb is us...Php 3:5ff...Paul recounts his Jewish pedigree... Everything that would boost his status in the Jewish social-religious hierarchy... circumcised @ 8 days old...pure-blooded Jew...member of the tribe of Benjamin... Pharisee...strict obedience to Jewish law...persecuted the church...obey the law %/o fault. But then Jesus adopts Paul into his promised salvation that is for all people by grace through faith in Jesus crucified/raised/ruling & Paul's life shifts to God time...*I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ & become one with him...I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers & sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past & looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race & receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.* Whatever the past has been...whatever the present is now...God offers an unimaginably great & precious promise about your future that cannot be broken. When you were baptized the promise of God's saving love for all people became the promise of God's saving love for you. 1 Thess 5:9-10 - *God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever.*

Key to wholehearted living Caleb Lives on God time but of equal importance...Caleb Lives towards God's purpose He had been adopted into God's family, but his permanent birthday is the day he is adopted into God's mission. He scouts the land for its conquest. He encourages his fellow Israelites for the battle ahead (from which they run). He fights for 5 yrs so the promise that each tribe will have its allotment of the land is realized. Then he turns his attention to "his" mountain. Every step through the desert wilderness for 40 years...every battle since he has crossed the Jordan River...every victory God has granted has whet his appetite for one thing: His. Promised. Portion...Whatever has been directly before him he could see through it that promised allocation with his name on it & his footprints already stamped into it. Part of Moses' final sermon: Deut 1:34ff - *"When the Lord heard your complaining, he became very angry. So he solemnly swore, 'Not one of you from this wicked generation will live to see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see this land because he has followed the Lord completely. I will give to him & his descendants some of the very land he explored during his scouting mission.'"* From the day Caleb first set foot in the Negev 45 years earlier he has lived towards God's purpose.

But John you said Caleb is us...Acts 20 recounts Paul's final missionary journey beginning with a trip back to Jerusalem. He is warned this trip spells hardship/pain. Unwaveringly Paul forges ahead...why? 20:22ff - I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, except the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail & suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God. My life is worth nothing if I quit early...my life is worth nothing if I hang it up b/4 God calls time. We share Paul's 1 job...the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God. The commission to share that good news of God's coming to us personally in Jesus to rescue & rebuild all creation through Christ's death/rez/rule in grace is ours because we are baptized into Jesus Christ. 2 Cor 5:19 - *For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.*

To the Colossians 3:1-3...Heb 13:14-16 - *For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. So therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. Don't forget to do good & to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.* Wholehearted living: on God's time & towards God's purpose making the reality of Christ's kingdom on earth as in heaven

Jn 7:37-39 - On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood & shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come & drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from their heart.'" (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him...)

Wholehearted living above all else holds on to a deep abiding relationship with God the Father & & doggedly clings to his promises because Christ has promised his life will be lived through yours & sends his Spirit to live in you.

Let's pray:

Gracious God...you seek one thing: our hearts as your very own forever. By your Son risen from death and ruling in love, and by the power of your Holy Spirit conquer each of us by grace. Let nothing stand between your Word and our obedience, your promises and our trust...through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.