

WELCOME 27th August 2023 – 13th Sunday after Pentecost '23 A

Joshua 1:1-9

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! God's still hard at work mending what needs mending! In the meantime... **Growing Praise** inserts & **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m. Link will be on website...Tuesday...Wednesday...

As we move into this week...

"Just keep swimming" maybe the most repeated line from **Finding Nemo**...On a father's journey to retrieve his lost son, **Dory** the confused blue tang knows only one thing: just keep swimming. Untroubled by the guilt or shame of the past, or any anxieties about the future, she tells the often crestfallen disheartened father **Marlin**. Just keep swimming. Just keep going where the trail leads. Just keep moving into the journey you know you have to travel. It's a journey that requires courage & strength & devotion to the role you are called to live. Just keep swimming.

As God's people reach the border of the Promised Land they must become something new...They must change from being a nomadic people into the conquering people of God they're intended to be. From tribes of wanderers into a Kingdom among whom God dwells. It's a journey blessed by courage & strength & a calling into the role God desires. **The Lord** said, "Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you.'

They must keep "swimming" into the land destined by God for them...living the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses & now Joshua & all Israel...As long as their lives reflect the promise, every step unfolds more of the promise. If they fall into the old habits of doubting, resisting, & longing for the ancient chains of Egypt... the promise never sees fulfilment. As long as they live the promise, the promise lives in them: "**Be strong & courageous!** Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

We are still the people of God's promise & God's call is still the same...to live as God's people in every circumstance, to live in the strength & courage of God's presence, power & provision at all times, & to proclaim the faithfulness of God to all his promises from eternity past to eternity without end.

We'll explore and experience that together as **WE** Live the Promise.

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Father you call us as your own & release us into this world for your purposes. Let every thought word & deed be held firm in your grace. Make our worship today & our lives in all things a reflection of your mission to this world & the path ahead for this band of disciples one that invites others into your life & love. Amid challenges & changes equip us by your Spirit for whatever tasks you have set for us. Infuse your wisdom into our hearts so that we discern your will & way in all things for your glory & the widened embrace of your kingdom in this city...through Jesus we pray... Amen.

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Where do you most need to "be strong & courageous" in your average week?
2. Where would "the Lord your God is with you" be most encouraging for you this week?

13 PENTECOST '23 A – A JOURNEY OF PROMISE: LIVING THE PROMISE

"No matter what else you do...Do your exercises!" Don't know how often I heard that piece of advice. From the time Leonie & I picked a date for my knee replacement... friends, family, physios, fellow joint recoverers, nurses, Drs...AND complete strangers...one & all: Just do your exercises. Just keep moving. Don't sit still. Use or lose it. *Just keep swimming*...was strangely how I heard it. No matter how bad it hurts...how stiff it feels...how little you really want to...what else you'd rather be doing...how frustrating... Do your exercises...just keep moving.

For 40 & some yrs...that was the Israelites. Just keep moving. Out of Egypt. Across the Red Sea. Into the wilderness. When the glory of God rose above the Tabernacle & moved away from the camp; they rolled up their tents & moved behind it. When it stopped; they stopped...until it moved again. That 40-yrs of moving not only imbedded in their hearts the goal of a land promised by God, but grew them in a life imbedded in that promise from God. Every day, moving or waiting God's presence & protection, his provision & care marked their lives. And every day the generation that doubted, resisted, & rebelled against God & his promise died off...apart from the fulfillment ...distant from the joy God held for them.

But as Joshua & the people stand w/ the land they've been living toward in view, they're faced w/ 2 challenges - 2 distinct yet interwoven calls from God. **1st** they have to learn to be warriors...430 yrs of slavery & 40 yrs of wandering & now they must conquer the land God has placed $\frac{b}{4}$ them. God promised he would drive out the 7 nations already in the land, but it is they who must engage in battle. **2nd** they have to keep moving...they have to live the promise...While the land will flow w/ milk/honey, flourish under their stewardship & God's on-going provision, God will grant "rest" from the weariness of the wilderness...they can't just sit on their hands, set up their tents & wait for the next helping of manna & quail...that stopped at the Jordan. **The Lord said,** "Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you.'

Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you.' As long as their lives reflect the promise, every step unfolds more of the promise. As long as they live the promise, the promise lives in them. Now...given what we know of their history...**What** would you make of their chances of doing that? Slim? **or** None? But here's the killer question: Given what you know of your history...**How** well does your life reveal what God in Christ is doing in you? How well do you live the promise of eternal life that is yours today & lasts forever? How well do you live as *more than a conqueror* in the risen Jesus?

So...what will they face in taking the land that God says is theirs according to his grace & his promise...Large walled cities. Vast strong armies. 7 nations that have lived in the land & adapted to it strategically & culturally. Giants...yep...by all reports there's some big fellas living in the hill country of the Negev...where Caleb will eventually settle his family. That's enough to scare even the most stalwart back into the wilderness. So 5 times...5X...5X

Moses said, "The Lord will destroy the nations living in the land, just as he destroyed Sihon & Og, the kings of the Amorites. The Lord will hand over to you the people who live there, & you must deal with them as I have commanded you. So be strong & courageous! Do not be afraid & do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you." – Dt 31:4-6

Then Moses called for Joshua, & as all Israel watched, he said to him, "Be strong & courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors he would give them. You are the one who will divide it among them as their grants of land. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you." – Dt 31:7-8

"Be strong & courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. – Jos 1:6

Be strong & very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. – Jos 1:7

Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day & night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper & succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong & courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." – Jos 1:8-9

5X "Be strong. Be courageous...Do not let fear get the best of you...God is w/ you." He is the strength that never fails you & the courage that never falters...He is the presence & power & provision that guards & guides your every footfall. You can trust God to be alongside you no matter what you face to accomplish what he has promised from ages past. Anchor your lives in God's Word. Ground yourselves in his promises because it's through them that what God seeks to accomplish in you is ultimately delivered to you.

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You know why that challenge & that assurance are repeated? Because tomorrow I have to wake up to junk I never imagined...to stuff I hoped to avoid...to things I prayed would go somewhere else. Because some days right out there in front of me is Jericho...a fortified frighteningly imposing threatening battle of a kind I've never fought ^{b/4}...or it's the Amalekites who decide to attack out of nowhere. I don't know what your Jericho is...who your Amalekites might be...might be your kids who made a ridiculously dangerous choice & it looks like it's gonna bite 'em their hinder parts. Maybe that bit of surgery went less excellently than your Dr predicted or that test showed something you wished it hadn't. And I don't care who you are you can't predict anticipate or prepare for every contingency especially when there's humans involved who sometimes just fly off in all directions at once. And sometimes the routine lulls you into a false sense of security...you get caught unaware & the interest rate means you're paying more than your house is worth.

But whatever tomorrow brings...*"Be strong. Be courageous...Do not let fear get the best of you...God is w/ you."* Simply do what God places right ^{b/4} you & you have enough to go on. He is the strength that never fails & the courage that never falters. He is the presence & power & provision that guards & guides your every footfall. You can trust God to be alongside you no matter what you face to accomplish what he has promised. Anchor your lives in God's Word. Ground yourselves in his promises because it's through them that what God seeks to accomplish in you is ultimately delivered to you.

You see this isn't just Joshua...some historical moment way back when. This is us. I've just finished reading Matthew...Mt 25 is powerful. Jesus tells 3 parables. 10 bridesmaids. 3 servants/talents. Sheep & goats. We read those like they're scary judgment warnings...but they're less a threat than a reminder. **Do** what you've been left to do. You have a role as a baptized child of God...live it to its fullest. Master has left you w/ resources. Use 'em like he does...generously flourishingly. God grants opportunities to demonstrate generosity, compassion & hospitality...do that. Simply do what God places right ^{b/4} you & you have enough to go on. He is the strength that never fails & the courage that never falters. He is the presence & power & provision that guards & guides your every footfall. God has you & yours...now be like him for someone else where you are.

Mt 28...Jesus rises from the grave...earthquake...angel...stone rolls away...guards faint w/ fright but the women are **told**, *"Don't be afraid!...I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen... now, go quickly & tell his disciples..."* He's risen & headed to Galilee. Women head off as commanded & bump into Jesus. **Jesus** said to them, *"Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers*

to leave for Galilee, & they will see me there." Then it gets interesting...**As** the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city & told the leading priests what had happened. The soldiers guarding the tomb actually do what the angel/Jesus said do: "go tell" someone I'm alive.

Then there's the bit we know but are scared of: **Jesus** came & told his disciples, *"I have been given all authority in heaven & earth. Therefore, go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & the Son & the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* By the time Mt's finished...3 "go tells" & 1 "went & told." And the enduring promise...*I am with you always.* Neither Joshua nor the 12 nor you or me are sent into this world alone but as part of a Kingdom – a community – a people called & sent to live the promise...assured/guaranteed by the same risen Jesus...We are still the people of God's promise & God's call is still the same...

- to live as God's people in every circumstance,
- to live in the strength & courage of God's presence, power & provision at all times, **AND**
- to proclaim the faithfulness of God to all his promises from eternity past to eternity without end.

As long as our lives reflect the promise, every step unfolds more of the promise. As long as we live the promise, the promise lives in us.

TAKE IT HOME- *As you leave today...be specific & share with your neighbour*

In what area of your life is God calling you to be strong & courageous?

How will you live both the call & the promise?

Let's pray with that in mind...

"Lord, do whatever you need to do **IN** us, so you can do whatever you want to do **THROUGH** us so that all whom we know in this city & beyond might be called into the embrace of your love, the fullness of your power & the joy of your purpose...through Jesus Christ...Amen.