

Be Courageous!

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[0 : 00] Children, I'm so glad you're here. I got a couple drawings last week that were phenomenal. I've got them on my desk right now, and I'm going to ask you to draw another picture this week, but it's going to come later in the sermon.

So, it's not to bait you, but just to hold out. It is a pretty cool situation, and I think it's going to be fun to draw a picture of.

In case of emergency, break glass. Have you seen those fire alarms?

Maybe it's a Bigonon thing now, but back in the day when I was a little lad, there'd be these red fire alarms on the wall, and there's this little kind of steel hammer dangling on a chain next to it, and it says, in case of emergency, break glass.

It was to protect people from pulling the alarm that didn't need to pull it. Well, when you are a leader, whether that's in the home, or that's in the workplace, or on an athletic team, or on a music band, or at school, or in the church, you're going to be challenged.

[1 : 12] You're going to face hard things. Leaders face challenges of many different kinds. Leadership challenges can be stifling.

They can wither a leader, wither them in his or her own weakness. Leadership challenges can stir up the foam of fear, and a leader can flounder in it.

This morning, I could stand before you and say something like this. Christian leadership is not for the weak or fearful.

But that's not true. God chooses the weak and the fearful to lead us people. Do you know why? Because God gives the weak and fearful strength and courage for the task He calls them to. He gives strength to the weak and courage to the fearful, and so this morning on this Elder Commissioning Sunday, I'm going to stand before you based on the authority of Joshua 1, and I'm going to call Lou and Dave, both of you guys, to be strong and courageous in the call God has on your life to be an elder of this church.

[2 : 44] To be strong and courageous. The heat's going to come. Break the glass. Pull the alarm.

Help is on the way. And this morning, there's a little word written on the alarm. It's Joshua 1, 1-9. And we're going to pull that this morning.

And so let's turn there in our Bibles to Joshua 1. It's at the beginning of your Bibles, right after Deuteronomy. Let me read it for you right now.

Here is Joshua 1, verses 1-9. This is God speaking. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 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. Every place the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.

[3 : 52] From the wilderness in 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.

Verse 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. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

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.

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.

[4 : 50] For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you, Joshua? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Amen. This is the reading of God's Word. Three times in Joshua 1, God specifically tells Joshua to be strong and courageous.

Three times. He's saying, Joshua, break the glass, pull the alarm, and I will be there to help you. What I want you to see this morning from this passage is how God makes a weak and fearful man strong and courageous.

We're going to see four great truths that give courage to the fearful. I'm just going to list them out for you right now. Truth 1, God's great cause.

That will put good courage in your heart. God's great call. That does put courage in your heart. God's great commands. When you know, when you know who spoke these words, it gives you courage.

[6 : 05] And God's great companionship. God is with us. That will give you courage. God's great cause. The book of Joshua is the history of the people of Israel occupying the promised land.

And so what Joshua is there for is to help us see how God occupies this land He promised from long ago. And He calls a particular man to lead His people.

Now there is a reason why God is leading His people in the promised land. You see it in chapter 1, verse 6. Be strong and courageous for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

And so what God is doing is He's going to bring His people into this land of Canaan because He promised to. He promised Abram long ago that He was going to make a nation out of them to bless the nations.

And He was going to give them this land. And so one may conclude, okay, why are you calling Joshua to lead this people into this promised land? And one can conclude, well, he's just fulfilling His promise.

[7 : 25] But there is a bigger cause going on. There's something grander going on here. Something more glorious. If you turn back to Genesis chapter 12.

Genesis, of course, is the first book of your Bible. Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 through 3. God calls Abram to come out of Mesopotamia and go. Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

The promised land. The land of Canaan. And I will make you a great nation, Israel. And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. Now, pay attention to verse 3. I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse.

And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. The scope of God's cause is the nations. He wants to bless the nations through His people. And you know what the goodness of this blessing is? God Himself. God wants to be a blessing to the nations through His people.

[8 : 35] God wants to get His glory out. He wants to make His fame known. And here, under the old covenant, before Jesus came, here's how that worked out. God called a specific people to Himself, Israel.

And He says, I'm going to bring you into this land and I'm going to dwell with you in your place. And you know what? You can bring the nations to this place so that they can see my glory in your midst and be amazed.

And so the methodology of the old covenant of God making His glory known was come and see. Come and see. Come and see God's glory and be blessed. But under the new covenant, things changed.

With the coming of Jesus, God's purpose to bless the nation still stands. He wants to get His great name out.

He wants His fame to be spread. He wants His glory to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But instead of a come and see methodology, God kind of reverses it.

[9 : 44] His new covenant people, the church, us, the redeemed, those blood-bought by the blood of Jesus, He tells us to go and tell of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

So in the new covenant, the covenant which we live under now, the one established by the blood of Jesus, we are to go tell it on the mountain.

We are to tell the nations of the great glory of God. His work that He's accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ. God's great cause is the glory of His name.

It's always been the case. So why is God bringing His people, Israel, into the promised land in Joshua chapter 1? Well, ultimately, it's to make His name known among the nations.

God's great. God's great. So for us today, on this Sunday, when we're commissioning these two men to be elders of this church, one can conclude, oh, this is a Sunday for the elders.

[10:45] It's not, ultimately. Or this is a Sunday for our church. Ultimately, that's not the case. Do you know why we're having an elder commissioning Sunday? Ultimately, it's for the glory of God.

for this church to be healthy and what God has called us to, to make His name great in our little slice of the nations here in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Now, does that put courage in your heart? It should. God, in all of His might, is for His great cause. He wants His name exalted in this city. Man. What a God we have.

God's great cause is the glory of His name. Now let's look at God's great call. Joshua 1 focuses on leadership.

[11:53] We've got a leadership vacuum. Moses has died. Israel's missing a leader. Who will lead God's people into the promised land?

Well, God knows. He had a guy that He's been grooming for a while. His name is Joshua. Look at verse 1. Let this kind of find a place in your heart.

God speaks directly to Joshua. Look at it. Verse 1. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant.

He speaks directly to him. He's calling him. He's commissioning for the task. Now, I want you to see all the you's, Y-O-U, in Joshua 1.

Here's, just look at verse 3. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you. That is speaking to Joshua. Verse 5.

[12:58] 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, Joshua. I will not leave you, Joshua, or forsake you, Joshua.

If you look at all the way down to verse 9. Have I not commanded you, Joshua? Joshua, be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened. Do not be dismayed. For the Lord, your God, is with you, Joshua.

Wherever you go, Joshua, God is with you, Joshua. Joshua, Joshua, Joshua. You, you, you. God is commissioning this man for that task.

It's his great call and it's very personal. He, his hand-picked Joshua for leading them into the promised land.

Now, Joshua had quite the resume. I don't know if you know this, but he was one of the original 12 spies that went out into the promised land and to scout out the land and came back with a good report. He believed God.

[14:00] He's like, yeah, God, we can take him with God. Let's go get it. And then the other 10 were like, wah, they're too big. Wah, wah, we can't go in. Did you know that Joshua was with Moses on Mount Sinai when Moses received the law?

Did you know that? Did you know when Moses was above the fray between Israel and the Amalekites and remember Aaron and Hur were holding up his hands and when he'd hold up his hands, kind of Israel would prevail against the Amalekites and when they'd drop him the Amalekites would prevail against Israel.

Do you know who was leading the charge? Who was down on the ground fighting? Joshua! The guy's a warrior. He's a stud. Probably squat 900 pounds.

Probably not. But what I want you to know is that God hand-picked Joshua for leading his people into the promised land.

You know why I'm telling you this? I want you to hear this. Lou, Dave, God has hand-picked you to be an elder of this church, to serve among a plurality of elders, to shepherd this particular people in this particular place at this particular time.

[15:21] Now, it is quite an honor. If you would open, move in your Bibles to the New Testament to the book of Acts, Acts verse 20, 28, let me just set up what's going on.

The Apostle Paul is on his way back to Jerusalem and he knows when he goes to Jerusalem he's going to get persecuted. And so, he's thinking, I'm probably not going to see the leaders of these churches again.

And so, on his way back to Jerusalem, he sends word out to the Ephesian elders to meet him in the town of Miletus. And there he meets them and he exhorts them. And it's in that context we read 20, 28.

Would you read that with me if you're there? Paul says to these Ephesian elders, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Paul recognized that these men the Holy Spirit had raised up to be elders of the Ephesian church. Now, unlike Joshua, guys, I haven't heard you say this, but I'm unaware of God audibly speaking to either of you to tell you that you are to be an elder of Christ the King Church.

[16:39] But God uses means. The Holy Spirit uses means. And so, over the last seven months, these men have gone through a process, a rigorous process of deciding, determining whether they want to be an elder and if they are in fact called to be an elder of this church.

And then last Sunday with an overwhelming affirmation from the members of this church, these men were recognized as being called of God to be elders of this church.

Do you know what that means? There's not a mistake here. The Holy Spirit has used these means to set you apart as elders.

He's hand-picked you to lead this church, to shepherd this people. Now, at the end of Acts 20, 28, after he says, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, he says, to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

We encountered this verse together a few months ago and there was a sober hush over us. This personal call to lead God's people, we recognize who this people belongs to.

[18:06] We recognize that the members of Christ the King Church are the blood-bought of Jesus. They don't belong to us. They belong to Him. And we are called to be under-shepherds of His flock, of this flock.

Now, if you were to ask Joshua how he felt about being commissioned by God Himself, or if you were to ask the Ephesian elders how they felt about being commissioned, about giving this responsibility to lead God's people, I'm guessing they would say things like, you know, it's very sobering.

It's a great responsibility. These are God's people. We are to be caring for the blood-bought of Jesus. That's a serious kind of a thing. And not only is it sobering, but it's humbling. It's like, me? Serve this people this way? I can't do that. It's humbling. So, a leader ends up saying things like this. In order to be a leader of God's people, I've got to depend on God.

Christ is going to give me what I need to lead His people. He's the vine. We're just branches. But, the sobriety, the humility, all which is good and right response to a call by God to lead His people, here's something else that should come out of this.

[19:27] Courage. God has called you to this task. He's called you to lead His people. There's going to be times where we break the glass.

We pull the alarm. It's going to happen every elder meeting because we are in constant awareness of our own weakness and fears.

And so, we're constantly breaking the glass, pulling the alarm and saying, God, we need You. We need You to strengthen us. We need You to give us courage to lead this people for the glory of Your name.

But, there's courage. He hasn't made a mistake. Just as He called Joshua, He has called the two of you to serve this people at this time.

He used different means, but He's called you nonetheless. This is God's great personal call and it gives you courage.

[20:35] Let's look at God's great commands. In verses 7 and 8, we read, only be strong and courageous, very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses, my servant, commanded you.

Do not turn from it, the law, 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 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.

In God's commissioning of Joshua, God emphasizes the absolute necessity of His Word in a leader who leads His people.

You can't miss it. Be careful to do according to all that Moses, my servant, commanded you. Joshua, do not turn to the right hand or to the left.

Joshua, stay focused. Remember Star Wars? The first movie? I mean, the very first, the 1977 movie? Luke Skywalker, X-Wing, dropping into that little trench, thank you, of the Death Star. [21 : 58] He's flying his X-Wing, R2-T2, beep-boop, beep-boop, beep-boop, he's in the back. He's got to drop his laser torpedo things down the exhaust tube of the Death Star to blow it up.

Remember? He's in the trench. Do you remember the guy on the other ship telling him to do? Stay on target. Stay on target.

Luke Skywalker getting rattled. Beep-boop, beep-boop, ah, ah, ah. And then Obi-Wan Kenobi from who knows where says, Luke, may the force be with you.

Trust the force, Luke. Stay on target. Brothers, stay on target. God's word is the target. It's our aim. And what God's word aims us at is the glory of God, His great cause. That's what He's called you to. God's word in a man who is humble is extremely powerful in God's hands.

[23 : 06] God is telling Joshua, stay on target, Joshua. Stay on target. Meditate on my word. Keep it close. Live it out.

Keep it on the tip of your tongue. That's how you lead, brother. Lead with God's word. God's word provides the path of God's blessing for His people.

Don't turn on the right. Don't turn to the left. Stay on target. Stay on the path of God's word. And my people will be blessed. Did you see the different expressions of God's word?

Three different ways. The law of Moses. The book of the law. All that is written in it. It's all got to do with words. The words of this book. You know, Joshua just had like the first five books.

We've got 66 books. Talk about staying on target. We've got a lot of target. Here's what Joshua knew. These words were inspired by God.

[24 : 09] These words originated in the mind of God. All scripture is God breathed. It originates in God's mind. This is God speaking to us.

And when you realize who this book started with, whose mind it starts with, you're realizing it's authoritative. We come under God's word.

Elders, everybody else, we're underneath it. We live under God's word. It's his inspired word. But it's not only inspired, it's sufficient. It provides everything we need from cover to cover.

It's got what you need. All scripture. All of it. Man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. It's sufficient for us.

And not only is it sufficient, it is powerful. Remember the great passage in Hebrews 4, verse 12, the word of God is living and active.

[25 : 10] It gets down into the nitty-gritty of people's lives. It penetrates. 2 Timothy 3 says it's profitable. It gets things done.

This is God speaking. And when God speaks into a situation, things happen. God is telling Joshua, get this book in your heart and lead out of it.

If you flip back to Ezra 7, verse 10, you know what you'd read about Ezra? He studied the word, did it, and taught it to others. You see the order?

He took it into himself and he sought to be faithful to it and then he taught it to others. He was a man of integrity. He wasn't calling anybody to do anything he himself wasn't seeking to do.

He was seeking to obey God's word and he was calling people to do the same. And that's exactly what God calls Joshua here to do. He says, Joshua, first and foremost, as I'm calling you to lead my people, get these words in you, meditate on them, and get them on the tip of your tongue.

[26 : 22] Lead out of it. Be careful to do what I say. Rightly handle my words. Bring them to bear on your life and you will be in a great position to bring them to bear on other people's lives.

Christian leadership begins with one's personal devotion and obedience to God's word. We depend on it. We trust in it.

We live by it. We lead out of our humble dependence and submission to God's word.

Another way to think about it is this. God in his glory wants to get his word into his people. And he has chosen us to get his word into his people.

It's not limited to us, but he's called us in the context of leadership this church to do it. What a privilege. What a responsibility. So Lou and Dave, I want to tell you this.

[27 : 33] The best thing that you can do for Christ the King Church is to continue to personally devote yourself to living according to all that God has said in this book.

Be a man beholden to God's book. Love it and live it. Be a lifelong learner of it. May it be at the forefront of your mind day and night.

May you stay on target. May it be on the tip of your tongue. Now can I just call everyone to imagine something with me? Imagine this.

that when you encounter one of the elders of Christ the King Church that you would encounter a man beholden to God's word. That you encounter a man who is eager to direct you to what God says.

That we would bring to conversations a question like this. Well, you know what? We've got to ask this question. What does God say about that? What does God say about this situation that you find yourself in?

[28 : 45] What does God say about this attitude that you're demonstrating? What does God say about it? We're to be men of the book. Man, it is a tremendous source of courage.

When you realize that this book is God speaking His all authoritative word, it is a tremendous source of courage. My courage is not in me.

My courage is in God and what He said. He's calling us to be courageous brothers. The last of these greats is a great promise.

promise. It's a great promise. God says, I'm with you. God's great companionship in this call to leadership.

God promises to be with us. Now, God's commands are at the very heart of Joshua's commission here. He says, get this word on your heart, but what sandwich is it?

[30 : 00] The bookends in verse 5 and verse 9 is this promise. I am with you, Joshua. Verse 5, as God was with Moses, so I will be with you, Joshua.

I will never leave you or forsake you, Joshua. I will not abandon you, Joshua. And then verse 9, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Every step of the way, I'm with you. It's a tremendous source of encouragement to know that the almighty God of the universe goes with you. He's got your back. Now the big question that we have to ask is, is this promise here in Joshua that God is with you, is that, can we take that on ourselves today?

Can we claim that as our own? You better believe it. In Matthew 28, 20, Jesus himself said this, go make disciples of the nations, baptizing them, teaching them all that I've commanded, and lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age.

I promise to be with you. He's promised to be with us, to comfort us, to strengthen us, and to fight for us.

[31 : 17] Fight for the glory of his great name. Alright, kids, the time has come. I want you to draw something for me. You ready? Look in Joshua 5.

Read with me. Here it is. Ready? Joshua received the command. He brings his people over the Jordan. He celebrates the first Passover with them, chapter 5, and in 513, right before they go and battle Jericho, we read this.

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. That's what I want you to draw. Right before they go to Jericho, Joshua encounters the commander of the Lord's army with his sword drawn.

He's ready for battle. Keep reading with me. And Joshua went to him and said, are you for us or for our adversaries? It's like Joshua saying, hey, are you one of us or one of them?

To which the commander of the Lord's army said, no, neither. He says, but I am the commander of the army of the Lord.

[32 : 34] And he says, now I have come. I am with you. With my sword drawn. And they go to Jericho and God does a mighty work.

Joshua, when he encounters this commander of the Lord's army, falls on his face and worships.

What does my Lord say to his servant? And the commander of the Lord's army said to him, take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.

It's the same thing that God in the burning bush told Moses. Moses worshipped. It was God in the burning bush. And here we have God present before Joshua.

Some scholars speculate that this is a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. Jesus. Whose name is Joshua.

Joshua is encountering the second Joshua. The Savior of the world, the commander of the Lord's army, who says, I'm going to fight for you.

[33 : 52] When Jesus came incarnate, He came and He began His conquest over the hearts of man. And His death on the cross and resurrection declared victory over sin, declared victory over

Satan, declared victory over the grave.

And right now, He's working out His plan among His people to get His glory out. And when He comes back, it's going to be final. Sin, the devil, death eradicated.

We've got a zealous Savior. Do you know what fuels the zeal of the Lord? His love for us, and His love for the glory of His name.

I hope that encourages you, brother. That your God is with you. Your Savior is the commander of the Lord's army who will fight for you because He loves you and He wants you to bring glory to His name.

This morning, break the glass, brothers. Pull the alarm of Joshua 1, 1-9. God's great cause is His glory.

[35 : 12] Let that encourage you. God's great calling is He chose you. He hasn't made a mistake. God's great commands, they are His words, and they accomplish great things.

Let that encourage you. And of course, maybe the greatest of all, I am with you. even to the end of the age. Be strong and courageous.

Let me pray. I'm going to have Lou and Dave come up, and Rick's going to lead out the next part of our commissioning. God in heaven, we are a people who need to be encouraged, and we look to You.

We're pulling the alarm. We need You, Lord. Would You give us strength? Would You give us courage for the cause You've called us upon? And of course, that is the glory of Your wonderful name, and it's in Your name we pray, Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.