

Be Strong and Courageous

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

Am I on? Good morning. Happy New Year's. It's good to see you all. It's not that cold out, is it? Maybe it is.

I think today it qualifies as really cold. Some of my best favorite stories have it in it.

Bilbo Baggins runs out the door without his handkerchief. Harry Potter shows up at the nine and three quarters platform at the train station.

Lucy pushes her way through the back of the wardrobe. All of them on the brink of something that they have not yet seen, encountered, or experienced.

[1 : 11] They're going into an adventure. They're facing something that is unknown and they don't know what lies ahead. If they knew what would lie ahead, they would probably be afraid.

If they knew what would lie ahead, they might be tempted to turn back. They might say, no, I don't know what I'm going to find on the other side of this.

I think I'd rather go back home and sit in my hobbit hole, smoke my pipe weed, or go back and play with my brothers and sisters in the professor's mansion.

These kinds of things happen in our lives as well, don't they? You go to the first day of a new school year at a new school where you don't know anybody.

What is it going to look like? What is it going to happen? When you move to a new town, when you stand at the altar and say, I do. When you step up and take a new job in your business or in your company, these transitions are new adventures.

[2 : 25] And though we often try to plan and try to examine and try to know ahead what's going to happen, in fact, they are adventures into an unknown. Now, some of you love this.

Some of you are made for this kind of adventure. Give me something unknown. Give me something that's new and different. You get bored easily and you think, there's got to be something new around the corner.

It's worth exploring. Some of us, maybe many of us though, shrink back. And sometimes for those of you who have that love of new adventures, the hardest challenges are the new adventures that occur in the place that you already are.

Where you have to rebuild or build a new relationship with your teenager as they grow up. Where you have to develop new patterns of life in the same place to stop continuing falling into that habitual sin that has characterized your life for so long.

You have to rebuild intimacy with your wife or husband when you've lived together for years and years in patterns of slow decay. Or where you walk into your work environment and you're asked to do the same job, but to do it differently.

[3 : 47] And you have to change in those things. These kinds of changes, these kinds of things force us into an unknown where we often in our human nature tend to shrink back.

We tend to be afraid of what we don't know. We feel the insecurity rising up in us. And we wonder, how can we go on?

How do we do this? You know, I've thought about this a lot because I've been, as I've been praying for our church recently. I wonder if there's a corporate application for us.

Many of you know, next door, probably in the next month, permits pending, there will be a big construction site next door.

At a congregational meeting later this spring, we will discuss together whether we want to do our own construction project. At Easter, we are expecting, at this point, to move to two services for the rest of the spring.

[5 : 00] We're still exploring that, but we think we're probably going to do it. There are unknowns that are facing our church. Unknown things about our context, unknown things about our patterns.

And it would be very easy for us to face them with fear, to feel the insecurity, and to want to pull back rather than moving ahead.

I think I can say for sure that whatever this year holds, it will not be more of the same from what you've experienced in the last couple of years. There'll be new territory to explore, new encounters to engage in, new challenges to face.

And the question is, how will we face it? How will we face these things in our own lives? How will we face them together as a church? This brings me to my text this morning, which is in the book of Joshua, chapter one.

If you want to turn in your pew Bibles, it's page 178. Joshua, chapter one, we'll be looking at verses one through nine. And as you're turning there, because this isn't a part of a series and we haven't talked about the context, remember that this is at the end of the great story in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, of God calling a people to himself and then doing this great act in Exodus through Deuteronomy, this great act of deliverance.

[6 : 33] His people who lived in slavery in Egypt, God has shown immense power and sovereignty and grace and love to his people by delivering them out of slavery, out of the hands of Egypt, bringing them through the wilderness and to the brink of the promised land.

They've been led through all of this by the servant Moses that God has raised up to be a leader of his people. And now as the people stand on from your, as you stand, they're now up along the eastern edge of the Jordan River and they're gonna move west across the Jordan River into the promised land, into the land that God told Abraham hundreds of years before, this will be the place where you and your people will live.

this is the land that I have, that I will give to you. But if you remember the story, it was the land that earlier in Numbers 13, they explored, they came to the edge of it once before, they looked, they sent in 12, 12 spies, they call them, to examine the land and what did they find?

The land was as good as promised, flowing with milk and honey, abundant in every natural resource. It was in many ways paradise, particularly compared to their wandering on the Sinai Peninsula in the desert and yet it was full of people.

People who, it seems, were taller than them. People who, they were afraid of. People's nations and they said, we cannot defeat these people, they are too great for us and they shrunk back at that time earlier.

[8 : 22] They've known their own weakness of grumbling and complaining and not trusting God. They didn't trust God for water and God made it flow from a rock.

They didn't trust God for food and God rained it down from heaven. A food that they nor anyone else had ever seen before. and now they come again to the edge of the promised land.

Now they come again to the very brink and yet Moses has died and they're going in with more uncertainty, more fears, more insecurity.

how will they respond to what comes next? It's in this context that we will read our passage this morning. For God then comes to speak to Joshua who is the one that God has determined raised up to be Moses' successor as the leader of God's people.

God speaks to Joshua about what is to come and how it is that they can move forward. So let's read this together. Joshua chapter one verses one through nine.

[9 : 35] Now 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 that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you just as I promised to Moses.

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 going 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. 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.

[10:41] 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 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 great success. 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.

Will you pray with me? Lord, we thank you this morning for this word.

Lord, thank you that in every part of your word, Lord, you have given us words that are useful for us. Words that teach, words that convict, words that instruct, words that command, words that encourage, words that rebuke.

[11:58] Lord, thank you for your word and how it does speak to us. And Lord, we pray this morning that you would speak to us through your word. Lord, I pray for all of us that we would have receptive hearts and listening ears to hear what you would have to say this morning to us.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. This is a rich passage.

It would be fun to spend lots of time on it. We're going to try to move through it. We're going to focus on three things. Three things that God says to his people as they're facing this uncertainty and this new transition.

They're facing this new situation. And we're going to look at these three things and apply them to our lives as we go along.

And the first thing that God says is go forward. Right? This is pretty obvious, isn't it? They're standing on the brink of the promised land.

[13:07] There's really one way for them to go. So, and yet it's interesting as you look at the first couple of verses, especially verses 3 and 4, particularly, some of the emphases.

One of the things that he says is all of you must go forward. He says go forward together. Don't leave any behind. None of you should shrink back from this.

But all of you should go. And all of you should go and take all of this land. And the promise here is an immense amount of land. In fact, the people of Israel didn't get all of this land.

They didn't go as far as the extent is described here out of their lack of faith and disobedience as they went forward. But the promise that God gave them was that there is a great big land that is going to have everything that you need to live and to thrive and to prosper in this world.

God had given them a big promise. And he had said go into it. Yes, it looks unknown. Yes, it looks uncertain. And in fact, it looks scary.

[14:16] And it probably looks hard. It's not going to be easy to take this land. There are people who live there. There are armies that live there. They have weapons. They are taller than you.

All of those things haven't changed. God says, I want you to go forward. Do not be afraid but be strong and courageous and go forward into the things that I have for you.

He does it based on his promise. Go forward because I have promised you that these things will be yours. Now, how do we think about this today?

How do we read the promises of God particularly with regard to taking land? It's a little tricky.

People have disagreed with it over the years.

But let me say this. God is not calling us to build a Christian nation where he will establish his kingdom through a particular political entity.

[15:32] In fact, it doesn't even seem that God will, God is promising that he will do that even through any particular local church expression.

None of us have a claim to the promises of the land to that extent. But what we do know for sure is that as God's people in the Old Testament had a physical place where they were going to live and display God's glory, in the New Testament, God takes his people and instead of bringing them together in a place, he scatters them into every tribe and tongue and nation.

And he says, I will send you to be my people throughout the earth to the ends of the earth. And as I do this, I will build my church.

This is the promise, it seems, that we are able to hold onto and to know that what God promised to the Old Testament people, the descendants of Abraham, was there is a land that I am going to give to you.

But as we see the greater fulfillment of what this is pointed to, it is God saying, I will build my church that will thrive in every part of this world. And in every part of this world then, God's church will await for the return of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom when once again there will be a day where the whole land will be for the people of God.

[17:11] and we will, with Christ, rule over it on the day that he comes and returns and establishes his kingdom and makes all things new and makes all things right.

And so there will be a day when we will get land, but it's not now. For now, what we get is the church.

This is the promise that God has given us. This is what we read earlier. I will build my church and the gates of hell will not stand against it.

So how do we apply this then to our lives? Well, I want to be really practical here. I want to call you to reaffirm the importance of the church in your life.

I want to ask you to be a partner with God, to be a participant with God in the thing that he is doing in building his church in the world.

[18:19] I want you to go forward and say, yes, I will do it. I will find a way to be a part of building the church. And because you're here, why don't you do it here in this church?

What a great idea. We'd love for you to do that. How do I build the church? Well, one thing it is, it means don't spend all your time grumbling and complaining about what we aren't, but seek to invest in improving our church so that we can be all that God would want us to be.

I don't say this because we struggle with this. We actually have a wonderful church. I do not feel like this is a besetting problem in our church, but I say it because it was the problem that Israel struggled with the most.

God, I don't trust you. God, this is never good enough. God, you're not providing the way I think you ought to. God, this isn't the way I expected you to work. God, I want you to do this differently. This is all the ways that the people of Israel disbelieved and doubted God.

And I don't want us to be that kind of people. I want us to be people who believe that God will build the church and that God graciously will build this church and that maybe he's called you to come here and to be a part of it.

[19:43] Look for God to use you to build our church. And not because we want to be great in the biggest church or the best church or the hippest church or the hottest church in town.

We don't really care about any of those things. What we do want to be is a church where Jesus Christ is lifted up and where people's lives are changed by it. And we want to call you to be a part of that.

Find ways to invest. Find ways to serve. Find ways to plug in. Invest your prayer life. Do you pray daily for our church?

Do it. Do you give regularly to our church? Do it. Do you give of your time?

Do you give of your talents? Do you give of your finances? Do you give of your heart? Do you love the church?

[20:46] Are you willing to go forward into this next year believing that God wants to continue to use this church to display the glory of Christ and the good news of the gospel?

So the first thing we see here is God wants us to go forward. The second thing is that God wants us as we go forward he wants us to go back.

that is he wants us to hold on to the things that he has already said. Look with me in verses 7 and 8 God gives Joshua this command take the people go in take the land do this but then we see secondly this significant exhortation in 7 and 8 be careful to do all the law do not turn from it to the right to the left this book of law shall not depart from you but you shall meditate on it day and night now think about what these people have seen or at least what they are just one generation removed from the law that they have come to them as Moses met with God as a man meets with a man face to face on the top of a mountain with smoke and fire right

God appeared in a dramatic life changing way to reveal himself and to give the law as an instruction to people who just a few months earlier maybe a few years earlier wondered if God had completely forgotten them God shows up and he says I have not forgotten you in fact I have delivered you and now I'm giving you this law so that you will understand what does it mean to enter into this covenant with me and to take up this covenant with me where I will be your God and you will be my people and it's a whole law of instructing them on how to live corporately civilly in their worship in their

everyday lives it's instruction on how they are ought to do this and all of it is how are they entering into covenant faithfulness with this God who has delivered them and saved them and called them covenant faithfulness expressed in love and devotion worship in obedience in trust and remember these people who are standing on the brink of the

Jordan River about to go into the promised land they remember they remember that the generation before them failed they recognize that Moses himself isn't entering in because he did not trust and follow God's word they know that there are people prone to turn back from God's word to grumble and complain and doubt to be independent thanks God for your instruction but I think we're going to do it our way because it'll probably work better than your way at least it seems so to me God says no remember the covenant that I made with you and remember that my words to you are words that are meant to give life that obedience is the way of life for God's people that it's not just about outward formalism and conformity to certain rules and regulations but it is an internal transformation and a delight and life oriented to please

[24 : 45] God in everything that we do and they are told to not simply remember it but to meditate on it let it be a part of their lives day and night so what about us well I hope you'll be encouraged but as we go forward as Trinity Baptist Church we know that there is only one thing it's a really slick logo that's going to get us going that's going to move us forward to it's a joke it's a joke it's not a logo it's not a gimmick it's not even a cool building it's not even a killer children's program or a great small group program or anything that we do the most important thing that we do is that the word of

God is central in the life of our church we need to be careful in our world and in our culture and the pragmatism of our culture and the pragmatism of our hearts where we think yeah does God's word really work I think we probably need something more and in the busyness of our lives when we don't see the immediate results of slogging our way through a Bible reading course where we're in the middle of the second half of Leviticus in February and we wonder really is this changing my life today and we give up and we think I give up it's too hard the word of God is the center of our life as a church it is why we spend so much time listening to God's word on Sunday morning and we don't shrink back from saying we think this is worth it the proclamation of

God's word is worth it every Sunday it's why the word of God is central in our small groups why when we gather together in small groups we are meant to be people gathered around the word of God and yes there's community and yes there's prayer and yes there's love and all sorts of wonderful things but the thing that pulls us together is our time in the word together and I pray that we are a church where the word of God is central in our lives of daily devotion that daily Bible reading is an individual and a family practice that we do on a regular basis we hold to God's word because it is the one way that we know God has spoken to us objectively clearly without confusion we know that God has spoken to us and he has spoken to us fully and richly and sufficiently all that we really need to know about

God is in there so God's word is central and God's word is cherished this is what God was challenging and calling his people to do as they entered into the promised land cherish my word and this is what God is calling us to do as well and so even as we move forward with some of these things that so easily could distract us I want to reaffirm this is the center of what we do and let us make sure that building programs and parking plans and multiple services don't distract us from the preaching and from the cherishing of God's word and the proclamation of the word that tells us about a God that reveals to us a

God who has worked salvation for us in Christ how about you how are you going to cherish and value God's word in this coming year and I say this to myself as much as I say this to you I hope you hear me when I say that we all need this do you have a reading plan there are great ones back there little gold booklets reading plans it'll help you read God's word every day it was really fun this morning Eli and I were just sitting on the couch and he got a Bible for his birthday and he started reading it which is wonderful I love to see him picking up and reading he was reading about Dinah that was fun Genesis 35 if you don't know what it is it's one of the ugly stories of the Old Testament but I was pointing to him to this reading plan saying hey as you are reading maybe you want to try something like this it was really fun it was a sweet moment as a father but

[30 : 12] I was thinking I should do that with him that would be good for me be some accountability do a reading plan and find a reading partner most of us don't do it well on our own find someone to do it with find someone to check in with one of the joys of text messages is that you can send a five second text message saying hey how'd your reading go today and that can be both a spur and an

encouragement to one another that you continue to read have you thought about joining a small group are you trying to do God's word on your own let me encourage you consider it if you're not in a small group we have wonderful small groups we have wonderful small group leaders it's a great time to value God's word in your life on a regular basis thirdly consider reading if nothing else consider reading the book of

Exodus over in Oregon we're going to start a series in the book of Exodus next week and I think we're going to do the whole book through the summer so but consider reading with us so that you're prepared so that when you walk in here on Sunday morning as you're preparing to hear God's word it's not totally new to you like oh what are we reading I don't remember I you know I've been distracted all week but think about how you can invest in reading ahead so that you're prepared as you come into service on Sunday to hear God's word there can be a great danger in our loving God's word rather than loving God Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for that very thing when he said you search the scriptures but you fail to see that they testify about me and they point to me so we have to know that as we search the scriptures it is in the context of a relationship with God it is so that we know God more it is so our minds know God's mind more it is so that our hearts know and respond to God's heart and God's actions more it is so we have a real relationship where we don't simply know him in our head but we love him in our hearts so God has said move ahead God has said move ahead under his word and the final encouragement the final word that God gives to his people on the brink of the promised land and the final word for us is this and you saw it multiple times God is with us that is God is with his people in the original context God is reaffirming this saying I am with you Joshua as the one who I have raised up to be the leader of my people in the same way that

I was with Moses now I want you to think about what a weighty promise that is I was with Moses when he spent 40 years in the wilderness I was with Moses when he walked into Pharaoh's court and did wonders and signs I was with Moses when he and my people were trapped between the armies of Egypt and the Red Sea I was with Moses as he instructed the people to paint the doors the lintels of their door so that the tenth plague the judgment would not come into the houses of God's people because a blood sacrifice had been given I was with Moses when you wandered in the wilderness and didn't have any water and he struck the rock and water came out I was with Moses as I revealed myself to you through my word in the Ten Commandments and in the law I was with Moses in these absolutely stunning life changing outside of our normal expectation kinds of ways and most importantly I was with Moses to fulfill all the promises and purposes that I revealed to him I never failed Moses so he says to Joshua I will never fail you I showed up to be your deliverance I showed up to be God who reveals himself with you I showed up not only to reveal myself to you but to go with you this is what it meant for

[35 : 38] God to be with Moses and God was saying I'm going to do the same thing you're facing an uncertain future you're going into an unknown land you don't know what lies ahead everything could feel really scary but the reason that it won't be is because of this simple fact I will be with you I will go with you I will go with you to fight your fights I will go with you to provide where there's no human means of provision I will go with you to love and to care for you as a shepherd I will go with you and be your God so that you will be my people friends this is a great promise and as we face uncertain futures as we face unknowns as we face the insecurity and the fears that rise up in our own hearts it's so easy for us to say

I can't do this I can't do this and God looks at us and he says I know you can't that's right you got it but I will be with you and I can do it I am the God who does immeasurably more than you ask or imagine and Moses didn't know it and Joshua didn't know it and it took another thousand years more than another thousand years for them to see the degree and the length to which God would go to show how faithful he is to his purposes and his promises to show what extent God would go to to be with us I I don't think anyone imagined the incarnation before it happened I don't think anyone imagined that God would come and be with us that he would be

Emmanuel God with us taking on human flesh so that we might know him but more than just so that we might know him as a revelation but so that he might come and be our perfect deliverer who by being with us could then stand for us and rescue us from sin Jesus Christ by his perfect life by his sufficient death and by his incredible resurrection from the dead has done all for us to accomplish the promises of God in our lives by defeating the power of sin and death in our lives and he is now given in this church and in the church universal the promise that he is continuing to build his church

through the proclamation of the gospel through the ongoing application of the work of Christ in the lives of individuals and the building of communities of believers throughout the world we can't do any of these things we can't change our hearts we can't save ourselves we can't build a church and we can't change the world but God can do all of these things and in fact God is doing all of these things and my greatest prayer for you in this coming year is that you would know this God that you would know this God who has called you out of darkness into light God who has called you to be his chosen people from all the peoples and tribes of the earth he called you to be his chosen people his royal priesthood his holy nation a people that belong to him so that you may declare the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into light as 1 Peter 2 says he's called us to be his church and to go forward under his word knowing that this is what God wants to do in our lives this year may not be easy it's going to be really inconvenient I promise you it's going to be inconvenient we need to be ready for that but I hope that you'll go back to Joshua 1 again and remember that the inconvenience and the scariness of unknowns and the insecurity that we feel and our discomfort with change and new things that they will be met with a confidence in God's word a courage to go forward and a foundation of knowing that God is with us and that he can do immeasurably more than we ask or even imagine let's pray father thank you for this word thank you for the encouragement and the challenge that it is for us lord [41 : 35] I pray that you would help us in this coming year lord to return to this truth again and again and again that lord as we move forward and cling to your word lord that we would know you to be with us and lord through the great trials and great triumphs of this coming year through the great sorrows and through the great celebrations and through the great celebrations lord lord that we lord that we will know that you are with us and that you are certain to be working to fulfill your promises to do the work that only you can do in this world for your glory lord we pray that we might be those who are walking with you who are ready to be used by you for those purposes lord help us as a church lord to walk this next year in faith lord knowing that you are God who has come to be with us so that we can be with you we pray these things in Jesus name amen