

Joshua 4:19-5:1
Feilding Baptist
12 January 2025

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Last week we began the year looking at the first chapter of Joshua. As Joshua takes over the leadership from Moses, God speaks to him. One verse stands out, verse nine, with its three parts

- a) Be strong and courageous.
- b) Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged,
- c) for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'

The challenge from me was the do not be afraid or discouraged. We remember the other two parts. It's a reminder of the goodness of God, and that God wants the best for us.

Romans 9 reflects on Moses, God's goodness, and God's desire to be known all over the earth.

Romans 9:15-17 New Living Translation
15 For God said to Moses,

"I will show mercy to anyone I choose,
and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." (Exodus 33:19)

16 So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.

17 For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth." (Exodus 9:16)

God did something even greater in the New Testament, to be known not only throughout the earth, but throughout the ages. That was the sending of Jesus, the death of returning to life of Jesus, the breaking of the powers of evil, sin, and death that Jesus achieved.

Which brings us to worship.

Father God, thank you for the news of you that goes before us. Thank you that we still celebrate Christmas and Easter to remember you, and all that you've done for us. Holy Spirit, please help us to worship with gratefulness this morning. Please help us to appreciate afresh that you are for us, not against us. Please help us to appreciate our God this morning. Amen.

Message - Advertisement

The miraculous was God's worldwide advertisement - that we might live with respect to God.

It might come to be that when you pay to watch tv, you get to see the grass at sports events. Have you noticed that digital advertising is placed on the field? It used to be painted on, now at the press of a button you can be advertising a chemist or tyre company or whatever. Five different advertisers on the field at one cricket match. And you only found out with the drone view, suddenly, all gone.

Of course the best form of advertising is, word of mouth. And that's what's happening here in Joshua, or has been happening up to now in Joshua. What is being advertised? God's power and commitment to people.

Advertisement is the title of the message today. Why, because we read in Joshua that the miraculous events, the Red Sea crossing and the Jordan River crossing are so that the whole world might know about God (Joshua 4:24). Yes, the dramatic actions in Egypt are God's way of not only

dethroning the Egyptian gods, but making sure the whole world knows that God is God, is King, and that all the others are pretenders.

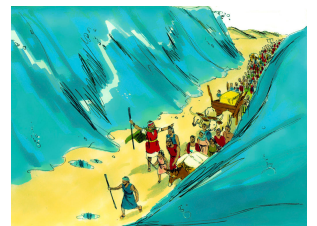
The people of Israel had seen some remarkable things. The angel of death had moved across Egypt, and the first born of everything not protected by the blood of a lamb, had died. At that point, Pharaoh, the Egyptian king had had enough and told the Israelites to get out.



But, was it hours or days later, he realised his work force had just left. Who would now work? And he sent his army to pursue the Israelites. The odds were good, the army was faster. The odds got better, the Israelites had headed to the Red Sea. They were trapped.



As they stood at the shore of the sea, water in front of them, the Egyptian army behind them, God did a remarkable thing. God send a wind that parted the water, and the entire nation of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. We read in Exodus 14:22 that walls of water were on each side of them.



Exodus 14:21-22 (NIV - UK)

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Imagine their emotions! Trapped, then, what is this? Hope, and huge relief! They cross the Red Sea on dry ground, and the Egyptian army pursue them. And the waters close. No more Egyptian army. The people of Israel are safe, and free.

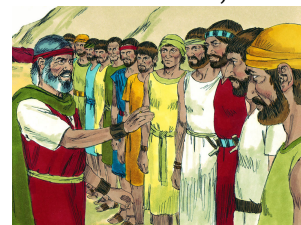


Their relief, their delight, their thankfulness to God is recorded in Exodus 15, Miriam's song of gratefulness.

Did this thankfulness last 40 years? How long do you think it lasted? Three verses after Miriam's song Exodus 15:24 records that the people grumbled against Moses. A few verses later, Exodus 16:3, these same people say that if only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! Their feelings are out there. They are hungry and grumpy.

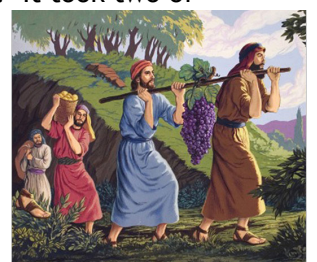
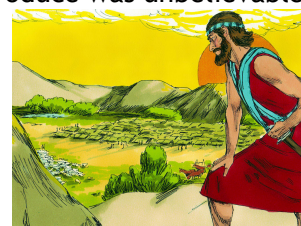


But they arrive at the Promised Land, the land God has promised to their ancestors. In Numbers 13 we read what happens. God instructs Moses to select a leader from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. These 12 leaders are sent into the land of Canaan, the land God was giving to Israel (Numbers 13:2) to scout out the land.

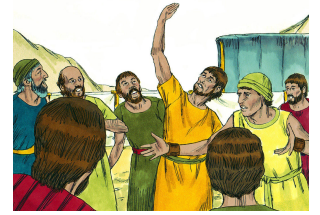


The were to find out about the soil, about the trees, the land and its produce, about the people, their villages, their fortifications (Numbers 13:18-20).

And they discovered that it was a remarkable land! The produce was unbelievable. It took two of them to carry back a bunch of grapes, pomegranates, and figs (Exodus 13:23). They returned to report to Moses and Aaron that indeed this Promised Land is a land of milk and honey (Exodus 13:27).



But, they reported, the people there, they are huge, the ancestors of giants. To them we looked like grasshoppers (Numbers 13:33)! If we go up there we'll be slaughtered, annihilated! In fact, the people decided that they would rather be alive in Egypt than dead here. Let's go back to Egypt they said (Numbers 14:4).

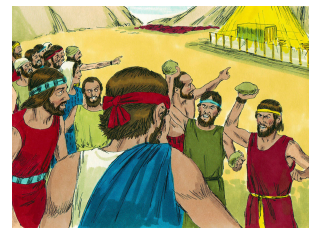


But two of the leaders, Joshua and Caleb, said no, no! You're forgetting something! If God is for us, who can be against us! God has promised us this land, we should trust Him, and go. Joshua and Caleb

Numbers 14:7-8 (NIV - UK)

said to the entire Israelite assembly, 'The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 8 If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.

But the Israelites valued their lives, and weren't going to follow this advice. They talked about stoning Joshua and Caleb for being so reckless (Numbers 14:10). And took the side of the ten who discouraged and brought fear to the people. God was also discouraged. God was disappointed that the people couldn't accept what He was offering.



In a revealing verse God speaks to Moses

Numbers 14:11 (NIV - UK)

11 The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?

Signs and miracles like the Red Sea parting.

God planned to strike these disobedient people down with a plague and destroy them (Numbers 14:12). But Moses argued for their survival. In verse 20, God relents and forgives the people. But, those who saw all that God did in Egypt, and in the wilderness so far, those who wouldn't trust, would not enter the promised land (Numbers 14:20-23). These were the consequences for unbelief, and lack of faith.



And the ten discouragers, the ten who wouldn't trust God, were struck with a plague, and died (Numbers 14:37).

And then, instead of continuing to the promised land, God led the people into the desert, for 40 years. Here they received the 10 Commandments, the other laws, they learnt how to live as a nation. And those who had refused to trust in God, quietly died out.



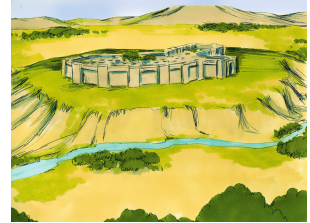
Which brings us, after 40 years of wandering in the desert, in the wilderness, to Joshua chapter 2, back to where the people have been before. A second chance. Do they now believe? Will they trust God? Will they step out, or do they still desire Egypt?

Well, they wouldn't wish for Egypt, for none of them there would now remember it. Did they want more of the desert, or a taste of the promised land? How were they feeling? Excited?



Remember God's words to Joshua in v9 from chapter 1. Remember the words of the people to Joshua as well (1:18);

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'



It was no accident that the people arrived opposite Jericho, at Shittim (Shi-tee-um) - the place of the acacia trees. Jericho is the oldest city in the world, in history. It had to be taken first because it was literally the key to all the others. Jericho controlled the major pass between east and west. Joshua could not have continued into Canaan without controlling this area (Longman & Garland, 865).

They arrive and just like 40 years ago, they send out spies to do due diligence. This time two spies are sent, as a pair, instead of 12 singles, maybe a parallel to Joshua and Caleb. Would they return and spread fear and discouragement? They head into Jericho secretly to check out its land and defences. They thought they were going secretly, only one verse later the king of Jericho (2:2) knows all about it.

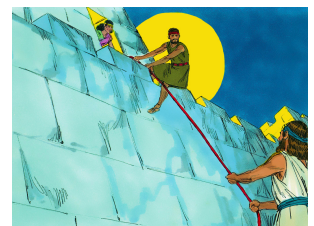
They meet a woman, Rahab. She is introduced as an escort or sex worker. [The word used for her is the same word used for people and cities that have made alliances with foreign nations and worshipped foreign gods. They are compromised. Jericho and the region's cities are compromised with their alliance with Egypt.]

She is most likely the local innkeeper, so a businesswoman, a good job to have with plenty of travellers passing through. This is the most likely reason the spies go to her house. It is possible they are there for other reasons, but probably not. Now, failure to report to the king villains who plot evil could result in the innkeeper's death. Was Rahab playing with fire? Yes, but she was very sure of herself and her God.



The king of Jericho sends Rahab a message, send those to spies to me. Instead Rahab hides the spies under flax on the roof of her house. This doesn't sound so bad. But, the reality is, that harvested flax [before barley so Februaryish] was soaked before it was dried. [bleached in the sun, then crushed, beaten, spun] It is likely that the two spies were hidden under something like pig slops! This would not have been a fun experience! (OT Background Com, 214).

In a remarkable few verses Rahab tells the spies that the people know all about the people of Israel and their God. They know that God saved them from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. And Rahab reports that their hearts are melting in fear (2:9) as they watch the Israelites approaching. But she said, she knows that the Lord your God, Yahweh, is God in heaven above and on earth below (2:11).

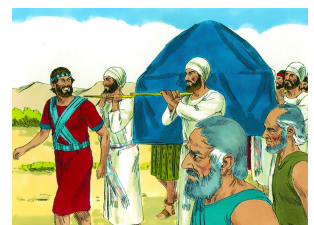


This woman whose occupation should have kept her on the margins of society, ends up being the hero of the story. (And is mentioned three times in the New Testament, honouring her Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). She is certainly in control.



Rahab suggested to the king that his servants head to the river fords quickly. And then she let the two spies down from her window, with a scarlet cord, sending them in the opposite direction, safely into the hills. If their safety is assured, then so will Rahab's and her family, when the Israelites turn up.

40 years earlier, despite having seen the miracles of God, the people of Israel got to the promised land, but were too scared to go in. They still didn't trust God. That's fascinating! Despite seeing miracles they were fearful and discouraged. Yet, 40 years later, after their wilderness experiences, having not seen the dramatic things of Egypt, but certainly hearing about them, that



discouragement and fear is nowhere to be seen. Is it simply that they now believed that God was with them? They were now strong and courageous. They now believed.

So they went bounding over to the other side, hopping and skipping, yahooping, yelling, we're free, we're free!!! Well, no. That would be disrespectful and reckless. Remember the river has been in full flood. And suddenly it has stopped. It has to be God, but who going to be first to go down into the now dry river bed. You, not me! It would be like playing roulette, you never know when the water is going to turn on again?



Unlike the people at the Red Sea, where they had to go or die, this time the people really had to trust God.

But, this crossing wasn't to picnic or celebrate. There were people living in this land, people who had loyalty to Egypt. The people of Israel crossed the Jordan for war, with 40 000 soldiers (Joshua 4:13).

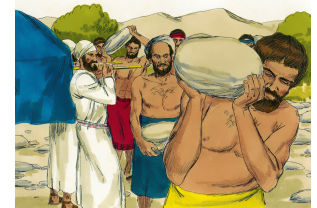


With a huge number of people, and livestock, this would have taken some time.

We read in Joshua 4

Joshua 4:19-5:1 (NIV - UK)

4:19 On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. 20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. 21 He said to the Israelites, 'In the future when your descendants ask their parents, "What do these stones mean?" 22 tell them, "Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground." 23 For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea[a] when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. 24 He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.'



5:1 Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they[b] had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

Footnotes

Joshua 4:23 Or the Sea of Reeds

Joshua 5:1 Another textual tradition we

So that's it then?

What is our application? What is our lesson from history?

In English 'fear' is mentioned in these last two verses. In Hebrew it's only there in v24. And it's a fear that we should have. This fear of God is about honouring God, reverencing God, worshipping God, being in awe of God. It's about respect. It's about worship. It's a positive thing.

The opposite to this is terror. That's what we see in the next verse, their hearts melted in fear. [Consider 1 John 4:18]

Rahab had discovered welcome in God. And she has no fear of the king of Jericho. The respect that she had for God saved her life.

That's the same for us. Perhaps the scarlet cord that hung from her window is like the blood of Jesus who saves us. The hand of the Lord is powerful. Let's live in respect.

[Benediction](#) - Nathan Nettleton

(based on Joshua 3: 7-17, I Thessalonians 2:9-13, Matthew 23: 1-12)

Go now, in the freedom of the gospel of Jesus.
Encourage one another to lead lives worthy of God
and walk together in service and humility.
Let your words and your lives be one in Jesus.

And may the God of lasting love open the way before you;
May Jesus the Messiah be your one instructor;
And may the Holy Spirit lead you on
into the promised land of God's kingdom and glory.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ Jesus. Amen.