

Sunday, July 18, 2021

Numbers 14:5-12

Joshua 1:1-15, 6:1-7,15-17, 20-27

“Joshua’s Leadership in the Promised Land”

We continue our summer series “At Your Request” whereby some of our church members have offered topics for our summer services. Today’s focus is “Joshua’s Leadership in the Promised Land” and particularly what Joshua did to become an example of a good leader. The first question we need to ask is who is this man named Joshua and why is his story from the Old Testament important to us today? Joshua had strong leadership characteristics and through his leadership, we learn what it means to be a leader amongst others and also how God leads and guides us in our lives today.

We first learn about Joshua being a spy for Moses. He had scouted out the land which the people of Israel and former slaves of Egypt would take over. As spies, Joshua along with Caleb had told the Israelites that the land was good as it was flowing with milk and honey. This was the beginning of Joshua’s leadership training. From our reading in Numbers 14, Joshua spoke up and expressed his opinion about the land he and Caleb had seen. He told the people not to rebel against God because God would protect them against those who lived there. Joshua knew that they would have to take over the land in some way but the people did not want to hear this. They even talked about stoning the spies. God then questioned Moses about the people’s loyalty to Him even after all the years and ways He had shown them signs of who He is. Although the people did not want to hear Joshua’s words, eventually Moses convinced the Israelites to listen, for the land of which Joshua spoke was the Promised Land.

They continue their journey to the Jordan River and it is here that Moses names Joshua as his successor and blesses him. Joshua was willing to do what needed to be done and so Joshua “stepped up to the plate.” Not too much later, Moses dies and they mourn his death. God then tells Joshua to proceed to cross the Jordan and gives him the encouragement he needs. God tells Joshua, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.”

How often are you in these situations? Maybe at school, a board room, during a meeting and you have information that will make a difference to the discussion taking place in whatever setting you are in. Do you sit quietly and listen to others and say nothing at all? Or do you share your thoughts and ideas knowing that what you say may turn the discussion in a new direction? Joshua reported what he had seen and even though the people did not want to hear, he spoke up. Sure he might have been stoned for his words, but God knew his heart as he had been beside Moses for many years. It was because of his willingness to serve, God blessed him as he took upon the role of leader after Moses’ death.

Joshua was also a leader who was willing to follow. God instructs Joshua to again, “Be strong and courageous but He continues by stating, “Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.” God’s plan had been given to Moses and now Joshua was to carry out the law of God as directed. Joshua was not to be swayed (left or right) but to stick with the law and the plan.

How often do you stick with a plan laid out for you- by faith or do you pivot and set it aside hoping something better comes along? What about God’s plan for your life? Do you know it or know how to discern it? There are many ways to ask God to reveal this to you but one that Joshua and Moses both received was direct. What do I do? God will answer this prayer for you just take the time and ask while you continue to grow in relationship with Him.

2020 was a difficult year for many people, organizations, and businesses. 2021 is becoming the time when we want a sense of normal to return. But what was normal is not fully desired by people- the flexibility of working from home and no commute time as higher productivity levels were reached in some sectors with people at home. The shift in the desire for more has decreased as stores were closed and people were unable to buy many items for a long time. For many organizations and businesses this time of shutdown or slowdown has brought new challenges and an increase in technology use. What is being talked about and shared in many board rooms is the need for strategic planning or a general plan for reopening and then projecting change for 2022. Often the basic questions asked are: What do we need? What can we afford to do? What can we do or need to let go?

For many people this is also true on an individual basis as employers are asking what works for their employees as the electronic method of meetings has become the preferred way to gather. Maybe it is time to do self reflection about what your priorities and preferences are and then counter this with what God has called you to do in the past? What is God calling you to do now? What is the plan that is now laid out for you? For example, if you could not volunteer for a special task because your commute to work took a long time and by the time you arrived home and had supper you were exhausted. But now- you do not commute- so what can you do differently as called by God?

Joshua was a leader who had a vision of hope and promise. Moses had told Joshua what to do. “God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.” The plan was to have the people to take possession of the land east of the Jordan. Moses and Joshua were fulfilling God’s promise that the Israelites would have their own land. The people were willing to follow him because they said that whatever you want us to do we will do; wherever you send us we will go. As they obeyed Moses they were now obeying Joshua. So Joshua carried on with the plan to take possession of the land.

Joshua then sent spies to Jericho to see what was going on. They then moved up into the hill country and looked around. Returning back to Joshua the spies reported what they had

seen and experienced with God's help. The next morning, Joshua led the people and asked the priests to carry the ark of the covenant in front of the people. They were preparing to enter Jericho. The priests carried the ark of the covenant and stood in the river following God's directions. As long as the priests were in the river, the people walked across dry ground into the Land. Once all were across the river, they made a cairn of rocks to remember this moment. Joshua had led the way across the River and the first city lay in front of them- Jericho.

Joshua listened to God's directives for his life and responded by leading others to come to Him. He also encouraged people to learn more about God and to trust Him. This was shown when God gave Joshua the instructions about what to do to capture Jericho. Seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns were to march with the warriors around the city walls of Jericho. They were to do this for 6 consecutive days. On the 7th day early in the morning, they were then to march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing their trumpets. A long blast of the trumpet will sound and this was the cue for everyone to shout out loud. This would then cause the city's walls to fall down. Then the warriors could charge into the city and capture it. In Joshua 6:27 we read, "So the Lord was with Joshua and his fame was in all the land."

Joshua had many leadership qualities and he served God faithfully. He had worked with Moses for many years and his heart was open to God leading and guiding him. He was willing to take on the task, to stay with the plan and to receive visions and insights as time progressed. God knew that Joshua was the one person who organized the people of Israel and they gradually spread out through the land. It is Joshua's faith in God which led him and guided him throughout his life. When we read the text from the book of Joshua we learn that God had a close relationship with Joshua. The Lord speaks to Joshua of the plans that are needed to complete each step towards the people coming into the Promised Land. Joshua hears these words from God and follows his directions. It is God's words which he hears and gets others to put into action. God leads and guides what needs to be done and what is completed is for the sake of the people. Joshua follows in faith as he led others around him to do their best.

Joshua's story of strong leadership teaches us that we too are called to lead and follow- to follow God's teachings, share with other in Christ's love and to seek guidance as we need it each day. As believers, we might ask, what might we learn from Joshua's life to help us today? We may not hear God's voice speaking like Joshua did, but we can still listen for His direction for our lives. We can follow and support those whom God has chosen to take lead in specific times, and do so with faith and hope.

But we also need to grow closer to God, through active and dangerous prayers. We need to read about people like Joshua who served in faith and how they interacted with God and learn how their lives were changed. We also need to connect with other people who follow God's teachings, and to listen for God to speak to us in ways which we may not know or understand. Joshua led the people as God guided. He then led many families to the Promised

Land and through each step after they crossed the Jordan River, Joshua knew that life for these people would only be better. Joshua believed in God and trusted him with his life.

As individuals and as a church family, God is leading our lives because we have faith and we trust him to do show us the way to begin anew. Like walking into the Promised Land there are many unknowns for the world and the church as we emerge from this pandemic. But if we have faith and are willing to answer the call to lead, to follow or to cast a new vision for Christ Jesus, we will not be left behind. We will move forward in faith and with hope. And this is what every one needs today- Hope for tomorrow in our places of work, our businesses, health care system and especially in our homes.

When we are feeling unsure about all these things, just like Joshua did too, we must remember the words of Psalm 25—“I trust in you my God; let me not be ashamed.” Let us take on new challenges and opportunities; let us share God’s vision of hope and remember Joshua’s faithfulness in his time of beginning anew in the Promised Land.

PRAYER

God we thank you for your servant Joshua and the gifts of leadership he shared to show us how best to serve you. Speak to us, and give to us a new vision of hope for what is to come in the weeks and months ahead. Enable us to be strong and courageous as we live in faith following your way of love. Call to us now as we seek our place to serve and lead, to follow and guide others to Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen.