

SUNDAY, July7, 2024 “Joseph’s Leadership Qualities”

Joshua 1:1-18 Mark 10:35-45

It is great to be back with you and sharing together on this first Sunday of July ! We begin a new sermon series today similar to what we have been doing for several years- “At your Request”. Individuals from the congregation indicated to me some topics, Bible stories, and general ideas about what they are interested in hearing more about. This series proves popular as the suggestions came in very quickly this year.

We start off learning about Joshua as a prominent leader of the people of Israel but as we hear his story, we learn that he was not always such. This is because of who his predecessor was and what God had in mind for him.

The passage that Steve read is not the first reference to Joshua in the Bible. What is recorded in Deuteronomy 31: 7-9 is Moses telling the people that Joshua will be his successor. Moses is @120 years old and because he killed a man in Egypt, he was not eligible to take or lead the people into the Promised Land. Moses summons Joshua and says to him in the sight of all of Israel. *“Be strong and bold, for you are the one who will go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their ancestors to give them, and you will put them in possession of it. It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”* What could Joshua say at this point? A short time later, Moses dies and the people take time to mourn his death. Then it is Joshua who is given instructions for leadership.

What does it take to be a leader? Why do people follow others? Leadership qualities include but are not limited to one’s ability to speak to all people, special skills and training and the ability to train others to do the same. In our world today there are many good leaders in business, in ministries, and in politics and there are those who hold leadership positions but are not always suited for the roles.

Joshua is the successor to Moses—a tough person to follow after a long tenured leadership role. But Joshua was true to his word by accomplishing something huge—taking the people into the Promised Land and establishing this area as a nation. Joshua did not do so alone- but under God’s guidance, strength and courage. He knew God and he continued to discover God’s laws, ways of living and what to do as he led the people to settle in Israel.

God’s instructions to Joshua state, *“Be strong and courageous, for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong*

and courageous being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. God tells Joshua what he told the people before Moses died. In addition to this God states, *“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it.* And again God states, *be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*

Joshua is told three times- ‘Be strong and courageous’ by God. After the people hear Joshua’s plan for preparing to go into the land, they state in verse 18 “be strong and courageous.” Why are these words emphasized so much? Strength and courage. This is because the people will not just walk into the land but will have to fight for it to make it their own. They will need strength and courage and these qualities are what makes Joshua a leader as he takes on the leadership role and personifies them for his people.

Strength- because he needed to know God’s plans and implement them, and courage in order to complete his task of settling many people under differing circumstances.

Joshua is also told by God to keep the Law of Moses. We must remember that Moses received the tablets upon which the commandments of God were recorded. But these are only a small portion of God’s laws which the people were to keep. So in the instructions to Joshua, he is reminded to keep the laws all of them and ensure that the people do the same. Another task for Joshua was to look at the land which would become Israel and to divide it up equally. As he worked directly with Moses, he knew the leaders, he knew the tribes and he knew what to do. The division of land was to be equal so that every person would know what portion of the Promised Land belonged to them.

God also told Joshua to study and meditate on the word of God. Joshua as leader needed to know God’s laws in order to put into place what was intended for the people. Joshua needed to understand God’s laws for fairness, equality and to maintain the community at this beginning point. But what else did Joshua do that enabled him to have good leadership qualities? Maybe we need to reflect upon what qualities are reflected as good in today’s leaders?

Joshua led many people into the land. There were many problems in preparing for this to occur; each area of the land had its own group of people in charge of defending themselves. But Joshua did not feel responsible for solving all the problems. He merely helped to solve the

problems with others.- whether it was sending in spies, walking about the walls of Jericho and causing the walls to tumble or even just sitting and praying to God about what to do. Joshua also included others in resolving problems and did not attempt to do all of them himself. He taught others what it means to have uncomfortable conversations with people who helped.

As individuals we face many situations and whether we are in designated leadership roles or not we can resolve problems based upon our experiences, skills and knowledge. The key part is to figure out how to do so in the best collaborative way. This was demonstrated by Jesus as shared in our reading from Mark 10. Jesus is asked by brothers James and John to take the seats on either about their taking the seats beside Jesus in heaven. Jesus questioned whether they knew what this meant. Yes Jesus had chosen them as leaders with the other disciples, but were they ready to take on the roles beside the Saviour? Did they fully understand what this position of leadership would entail? And what does this mean for us who seek to learn about leadership and showing others how to live God's way?

When we reflect on our lives today what qualities do we seek in leaders? – For some people what is needed is skills, talents, trainings and the ability to diligently work with other people. People who are leaders are problem solvers and those who are not are merely problem pointer outers. Leaders also are servants of others because good leaders teach what it means to serve and be served. And it is these qualities that Jesus looked at James and John and wondered whether they could do this. Could they lead others to drink the cup of salvation? Or be baptised with the baptism that he is baptised with? They said yes, but Jesus' response to their request is not his to grant. For Jesus came to serve others and what he was asking the disciples to do is what Joshua did, and what we are called to do. We are called to lead yes, but we are also called to follow. And who did Joshua follow? God's plan for the people to be entering into the Promised Land. And who are you following? Are you both leading others to Christ and serving them in His name?

. What about your leadership skills? How are you growing as a leader in whatever you do? What are the character traits of leaders which you identify with? Joshua's leadership qualities include: Know God. Obey God. Start the plan with God. Being accountable. Leading by example.

From Joshua's life we learn the qualities of leadership he showed as he led the people to be established in the Promised Land. But we must look at who we may be as leaders through faith and with the knowledge that what is key in completing our tasks is to be courageous and

strong. We must also remember that we are not alone ever. God is with us and leads all of us to live life as we share with others the good news of God's love. We just need to remember to be strong and courageous and God will help us out as we each seek and find our place in this world.

PRAYER:

Holy God of grace we praise you for Joshua's leadership gifts and skills as he served you fully and prepared the people to live in the Promised Land. We pray that you would call us to follow, so that we will lead you and love you in all what we say and do. Bless us O God we pray.
Amen.