

INI - SDG

2nd Sunday after Trinity

July 3, 2011

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla

Series: JOSHUA #02

Text: Joshua 1:1-9 *After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them – the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea 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; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

Theme: "WHEREVER YOU GO..."

- The Lord is with you
- Be strong and of good courage
- Be faithful to His Word

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

What is the hardest task anyone has ever asked you to do? The type of task that you thought to yourself, "There is no way I can do this! He's asking too much of me!" Maybe it was a physical task like spending an afternoon of stacking those rectangular bales of straw in the hot July sun. Maybe it was mental and physical, like having a woman having a baby. I wonder how many times the nurses and doctors in the hospital have heard a woman in labor say, "I can't do this!" - as if there was an option.

In each of those situations, the job was always made easier if you had somebody there with you. Maybe your brother was going to help you stacking bales or maybe Mom was going to help you read your book. Having a husband in the delivery room to encourage and comfort his wife during labor can help the birthing process.

But imagine for a moment, if you had the task that Joshua had before him. He was to be the leader a nation of two million people. Who here would be up for the task? And not just be a government leader like our president is, but Joshua was also to be the spiritual leader of those two million people. And imagine the task you have involved leading armies into battle to take

possession of enemy territory and their homes and cities. AND THEN imagine that you are taking over for one of the most famous, faithful, beloved, and ONLY leader those two million people have ever known, namely, Moses! Which of you would be up for the task?

Remember this is the land that the LORD God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The land in which the promised Savior of the world, Jesus, was to be born one day. If Joshua failed, then the promises of God would be broken and the Savior might never be born! Can you imagine being Joshua and having all this responsibility placed on your shoulders? One can almost hear Joshua say with the Apostle Paul, ***“Who is sufficient for these things?”*** (2 Cor 2:16)

As we mentioned earlier, a monumental task is always made easier if we have a good support team. Joshua has the same support team that every Christ-believer has. Wherever we go, the LORD promises to be with us. Because He is with us, wherever we go the LORD commands us to be strong and of good courage. And wherever we go, He wants us to be faithful to His Word. May the LORD God comfort and strengthen us by His holy Word.

THE LORD IS WITH YOU

As Joshua was about to lead Israel into the promised land of Canaan and into battle, the LORD assures Joshua in verse 5, ***“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.”*** And at the close of verse 9 we read, ***“The LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*** This is exactly what Joshua needed to hear. The LORD who was with Moses for all those years in the wilderness was now going to be with him. The LORD wasn't going to forget about Joshua once they entered battle. The LORD was never going to depart from being with Joshua. He would not turn His back on Joshua. But wherever Joshua went the LORD His God was with him.

Things are different today. God has not called us to invade and take possession of a foreign country. Yet the tasks which the LORD has called us to can seem just as daunting at times. As the called children of God, we are strangers in a strange land. Jesus says that while we may be in the world, we are not of the world (Jn 15:19). In a way, we are living in the enemy's territory. We live in a world and society that is hostile to Christ and His Gospel. And it is to this hostile world and society that God has called us to tasks that seem just as daunting as invading a foreign country. Jesus says to us, ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”*** (Mk 16:15) Preach even to those who are hostile to the Gospel, such as our Mission Helper Team will be doing this coming week in Nepal where Christianity is seen as foreign and inferior by Hindu's and Buddhists, and Christians are persecuted for their faith.

Jesus has also called us to be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World. That is, we are not to hide our faith or keep from putting our faith into practice by obeying God's Word. This can be difficult at times, especially when people around us - whether it be friends or family or just the crowd we are hanging with - are acting contrary to God's Word. It is difficult when you know you will be mocked and ridiculed as a “holier-than-thou, goody-two-shoes Christian.”

In a world that is so hostile to the truth of God's Word and Jesus as the only Savior of the world, we need to hear that God is with us wherever we go, as He was with Joshua and as He was with Moses. And we have just that assurance! Jesus is on our side. He was born for us. He came to live as our Substitute under the Law. He lived a perfect life in the eyes of God and He did it because we did not. He came to die as our Substitute. He took the consequences of our sin on Himself and suffered the wrath of God in our place. What more could Jesus do to prove that

He is on our side?! As Jesus sent His disciples out into the world to preach the Gospel He left them and us with this promise, ***“And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*** (Mt 28:20) Jesus is with us! The God who loved us so much that He gave His own beloved Son into death to save us, will not suddenly forget about us. What He says to Joshua, He says to all His redeemed children, ***“The LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*** Wherever you go - whether it is Nepal, college, or out for coffee - the LORD is with you.

BE STRONG AND GOOD COURAGE

Those of you who have taught your children to ride their bicycles, know how important it is that you give them the impression that you are always holding onto the seat. You'll run right along side of them, holding the bicycle seat at first to give them balance. But at some point you have to let go. Yet you still run along side the bicycle so they don't get scared thinking that you have abandoned them. If they can't see you or sense your presence they get scared and begin to panic.

The LORD's purpose in telling Joshua that He was with Him wherever He went was to build him up and encourage him for the daunting task ahead of him. Three times the LORD tells Joshua, ***“Be strong and of good courage...be strong and very courageous...Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage.”*** Leading an entire nation to invade a foreign country would require that Joshua be strong and very courageous wherever he went and whatever situation he found himself in. Even when the odds seemed like they were stacked against the Israelites, Joshua was to rely on the fact that the LORD his God was with him for his strength and courage.

Since the LORD our God is with us, let us be strong and of good courage too! We often worry about what someone will say or do if we speak up about our faith. We worry about what kind of hostilities our children will face when they grow up and go out into the world. We worry what will happen if our pastor was to take the call to another congregation. Remember that the LORD is with you wherever you go, so be strong in the faith and of good courage wherever you go.

The Apostle Paul emphasized this very thing in our New Testament lesson, ***“If God is for us, who can be against us?”*** (Rom 8:31) Those are words which give us strength and courage. Paul goes on to talk about how God has already declared us righteous through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so no one can condemn us and no one can charge us of anything. It is a done deal. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. We have been saved. Therefore let us not be fearful or timid Christians, but be strong and of good courage wherever we go, for God Himself is for us.

BE FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD

But all of this does not mean that we can do whatever we want and expect God to support us. God did not send Joshua into Canaan and say “I'm with you, even if you ignore all My commandments.” Joshua was not just to be strong and courageous as he led the people, he was also to be strong and courageous in obeying the Word of God. Joshua was not to stray to the right or to the left of what God had commanded him. By that, the LORD means that Joshua was not to add or ignore the commands God gave him. This would be difficult at times. The people would not always want to do what Joshua said, others might try to lead Joshua in a different direction, but Joshua was to stay on the straight and narrow and be faithful to God's Word

wherever he went.

In order to do this, it was important that Joshua make the Word of God a part of his everyday life wherever he went. ***“The Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to it all that is written in it.”*** The Word of God was not just to be something for one day of the week for Joshua. Day and night he needed to contemplate and speak about all that the LORD had commanded in His Word. Only by being personally familiar with it, would he know how to apply it WHEREVER HE WENT. Then his way would be prosperous, and he would have good success as leader of the Children of Israel.

By bringing us to faith in Jesus, God has made us His children. By the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are at peace with God - He is our Father and we are His children. God in His amazing grace has made us heirs of eternal life. As His children, the Holy Spirit has created a desire in our hearts to be faithful to our heavenly Father. As such it is important that we hear and learn God's word. We need to keep His Word before us wherever we go. As the LORD says in our text, to ***meditate in it day and night***. That is, that we make the Word of God a part of our lives, not just for an hour on Sundays but every day of the week - wherever we go.

What does it mean to meditate on it day and night? Well it begins by making the Word of God a part of your day. Begin with a morning devotion - whether it is a chapter of the Bible you are reading or a Scriptural devotion based on a verse of Scripture. Read the passage and then re-read it - even out-loud. This is God's Word and He has something to say to you. Throughout the day, think about that portion of Scripture and maybe even return to it at night for your devotion. Talk about it with your spouse and your children. Pray about the Word, that God would help you to understand it and faithfully apply it to your life. And that He would keep you from error by either adding to His Word or ignoring what it says.

You can begin this process even today. Talk about the sermon text or the Scripture reading on your way home. Re-read those verses again tonight before you go to bed and meditate on what God is saying. And through His Word, God will bless you. His Holy Spirit will strengthen your faith wherever you go.

It is hard to imagine what it must have been like to be Joshua. To be called to such a monumental task as leading the Children of Israel to take possession of the promised land. As the redeemed children of God, we have been called to just as high of a calling. We are called to preach the Gospel, be the Salt of the earth, the Light of the World, and to Abide in His Word. Because the LORD is with us wherever we go, we can be strong and of good courage wherever we go. May He always help us to be faithful to His word wherever we go. Praise be to our Immanuel, God with us, who says, ***“And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*** (Mt 28:20) Amen!