

Christ Community Covenant Church
Famous Last Words: Joshua – Only be strong and very courageous!
Pastor Dave Scherrer - August 10, 2014

Prayer time for our world/Iraq Christians at risk
Family Ministry Moment
Vitality Team
Children's Ministry moment

Brief review of our series and the concept of Famous Last Words

Abraham: "We can know God's will but we must have the courage to follow after it"
Moses: "There are consequences to disobedience – We all need a Sinless Savior"
Joshua: "Put away your foreign gods – incline your heart to the Lord"

Joshua remembered:

- Along with Caleb, he was one of the faithful spies that reported on the Promised Land.
- He accompanied Moses part way up Mt. Sinai for the Ten Commandments.
- You remember the Jordan River parted in two as the Red Sea did for Moses as they advanced to take on Jericho, the first of their conquests.
- At Gibeon, Joshua asked Yahweh to cause the sun and moon to stand still, so that he could finish the battle in daylight. This event is most notable because "there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Yahweh hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Yahweh fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:14). God also fought for the Israelites in this battle, for he hurled huge hailstones from the sky which killed more Canaanites than those which the Israelites slaughtered. From there on, Joshua was able to lead the Israelites to several victories, securing much of the land of Canaan.

He was 40 years old when we first read of him as a spy, He was 80 when Moses died.
When they finally finished the conquest of the Promised Land Joshua was 110 years old.



I think there are **three things that we can learn from the last words of Joshua**. One of them is a kind of warning, a caution that it is tempting to claim responsibility for what God has actually done:

It is tempting to claim responsibility for what God has done

One thing Joshua did faithfully was to give the Lord full credit for the victories of the Israelites. From last week we remember that this was the sin of Moses, to usurp the glory and credit from God. It was a most serious sin and cost Moses his chance to enter the Promised Land. I think Joshua learned a lesson by watching Moses' life run its course.

As a forty year old spy he gave credit to God. The people wanted to cut and run and they cried out for a new leader rather than follow Moses into this new land. But hear what Joshua and Caleb did and said:

Numbers 14:6-10

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes⁷ and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land.⁸ If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."¹⁰ Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones.

You can hear the courage and faith in his voice. He lived his life being strong and very courageous, not because he was such a tough guy but because he had great faith in God. God said to Joshua at the beginning of this story to "be strong and very courageous" and that He/God would go before the Hebrews and fight for them. In 7 years God defeated 31 kings in the land. Joshua divided the land among the 12 tribes of Israel as God directed.

Now let's look at this passage as the life of Joshua draws to a close. You will hear him continue to give God the credit for the conquered land:

Joshua 23:1-6

A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years,² Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, "I am now old and well advanced in years.³ And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you.⁴ Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west.⁵ The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.⁶ Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left.

I have a question for you. Do you think we are still tempted to take credit and honor away from God? I think so, in fact I far more often hear of people taking credit for their jobs and their money and their school success or athletic prowess. Do you think that a Pastor could somehow take credit away from God? Sadly, I think it happens all too often. Far too many pastors think that they have created the new approach or program or ministry model. By my experience, God deserves the credit and honor in the good times and bad. That is our firm hope here at 4Cs.

Application: Make a daily habit of finding one thing to praise God for. Be on the watch for God Moments and when they happen give credit where credit is due. And I am going to challenge us to give credit to God to someone else not just in your mind to God. It will help reinforce the habit of looking for God moments, but you will encourage another believer as you testify of God's power and presence in your life.

Second, it is tempting to make promises that you don't intend to keep:

It is tempting to make promises you don't intend to keep

As we fast forward to the end of Joshua's life we see Joshua challenging the people to live by faith in God. He wants to challenge their resolve to live by faith not by sword. Two times he asks the people will they obey the Lord, and two times they answer in unison "Yes we will!" It is here that we hear the famous verse found in chapter 24 where we hear Joshua saying, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." And he challenges the people to join him in faith:

Joshua 24:23-29

²³ He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel." ²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey." ²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. ²⁶ And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. ²⁷ And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God." ²⁸ So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. ²⁹ After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old.

It is a dangerous thing to make an oath to God. We have heard of stories and seen movies where people make deals with God, or the devil for that matter. For the most part, I don't think God is in the business of deals. But he does care that our yes is yes.

Application: Make few promises and be careful to deliver. The people of Israel took this vow seriously and for perhaps 40 years everything went well, the people followed their elders as they followed God even after Joshua dies. But then something terrible happens. People begin to stop telling the story.

It is disastrous to not tell the story to the next generation

Judges 2:6-8, 10

When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. ⁷ And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. ⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. ¹⁰ And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.

We are told that we live in a post Christian culture now in the 21st century. The Greatest Generation took us, the Baby Boomers and 1960's rebellious teens, to church. Many of us heard the message in person but when it came to embracing the message, we drifted. And when it came to telling the story to the next generation we bought the Dr. Spock party line that we shouldn't shove religion down a child's throat. So while my generation was immoral, this generation is amoral. They have nothing absolute by which to gage their lives. So we see lives of despair with depression in teens soaring to epic proportions. Cutting behavior and eating disorders are each an expression of deep abiding loneliness that the growing social network phenomenon cannot satisfy.

We know that we are not responsible for the salvation of the next generation, but we are responsible to tell our God story to the next generation. That compelling reality was what motivated me to spend 30 years of my life telling the story of God's love to teenagers who had never heard the Jesus story before.

Ryley Henderson interview

Many months ago, a woman called the church office. She explained to me that she felt compelled to donate money to our church so that a kid could go to camp (Covenant Heights). She asked me how much it would be for a full week of camp. I let her know the total cost and she said that she would get the money to me. I did not hear from her for a bit and then received another phone call from her. She was getting the money together and would drop off a check to me soon. Again, some time passed. Then as I sat in the office one day she came in. I did not recognize her and she introduced herself and told me her story. When she was young an anonymous person donated money so that she and her 6 siblings could go to church summer camp. She proceeded to cry and began to hand me her check. She took back her check and walked into the corner of my office and began to pray over the check asking God to bless the child who receives this money. She handed me her check, I thanked her whole heartedly. She asked to remain anonymous and so we did. After we received the money, I felt compelled to tell Amanda Hoskins (the head of the 4Cs scholarships for Covenant Heights) the story and also let her know that I knew of someone that would not be able to attend camp this year because of money troubles. The missions

committee granted him the money to be able to go to camp. Months later he went to camp and had a great time. The first time that I had to sit with him and hear about camp he looked at me and said, "I wanted to tell you this in person. The last night of camp I accepted Christ." He went on to tell me all about his experience with Jesus all week. What a God story!

Prayer

Benediction: Joshua 24:14

¹⁴ "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.