

Sunday Sermon: 5/12/2019

Sermon Text: Joshua 1:5-9

⁵No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

⁷“Be strong and very courageous. 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. ⁸Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. ⁹*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.*”

Sermon Theme: Be Strong and Courageous

Last Saturday, before examination Sunday, we went to a movie together. It was an action movie filled with heroes doing heroic things. There were many times in that 3 hour movie that there were examples of strong men and women who acted courageously in defeating the villains. They had to find that courage to fight against unbeatable odds and somehow they did, again and again.

We went to that movie for a couple of reasons. It was a blockbuster and everyone wanted to see it, but we also went as a stress breaker. We sat here last Saturday and practiced our examination questions together and we needed a break. As we practiced there were nerves and excitement and some fear. What you were about to do was something that was scary. However, before that last practice and after that stress-breaking movie, we had a prayer. Do you remember what that prayer was? I hope you do because you have already heard it this morning. It was a prayer that echoed God's words from our Old Testament lesson. **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.**

I hope you remember that prayer because it was not just a prayer for last week Sunday, or even today and it is not a prayer for you. It is a prayer for every Christian asking God to help us to be strong and courageous because it is the Lord who will give you strength and see you through.

If you want to think about something scary, step into Joshua's situation for a moment. He has served Moses faithfully for 40+ years. He has seen the special relationship that God had with Moses, even speaking with him directly. He had seen the people at their best, praising and thanking God, and at their worst grumbling and complaining against God in their unbelief.

Now, Moses is dead, and he is the leader of this great group of people known as the children of Israel. Not only that, but it is his job to lead these people into the promised land of Canaan, a plan which had failed miserably 40 years before because of the lack of faith of the people. There are still people and cities and armies that are in that land. Battles and war was on the horizon. This was a new job that was full of worries and fears.

If you remember our Old Testament lesson, Joshua was not alone. The Lord came to him with a command and a promise. The command was simple: Get the people ready to go into the land. The promise was amazing: Be strong and courageous as you go, I will be with you. 4 times in these beginning verses of Joshua, God tells Joshua be strong and courageous. Joshua was to be strong, not just in body, but in faith. He was to be courageous, not because he was a man who didn't feel fear, but because he was a man who trusted in the Lord.

As the congregation sat listening to you last Sunday, they were many who thought about their own examination and confirmation. There were a few people who told me stories of being where you were then and where you are now. It is a great blessing that we are joined together by a common confession of faith and belief which is based on God's own words.

Yet, if you ask any one of these people, they will also tell you that they have not lived up to that promise that they have made. There have times in their life where they have failed miserably to be strong and courageous in the Lord. They can tell you as I can, that the temptation to do it alone, by ourselves, without the

Lord is very strong temptation. They can tell you as I can, that we fall into the temptation of trying to build our lives on our own efforts, on our own works, on our own strength.

Think about it this way. Most of us know when we are sick to go to the doctor. After the doctor runs the tests, he calls us back into the office and says. "Here is what you have. The good news is, it is completely treatable and we will have it all taken of." What do you say? Most of us thank the doctor, fill the prescription, take the medicine and are cured.

But instead of listening to the doctor who is trying to help us, what if we said, "Thanks doctor, I don't think that's really what's wrong with me. I'm not going to take the medicine. I have something else I think I will try."

That would be foolish if we did it with a doctor, but isn't that what we do with God? Instead of looking to the Lord for all that we need in life, instead of looking to him for our only way to heaven. Instead of living life as strong and courageous Christians trusting in him, we live as we and scared sinners. We let our fears overshadow our faith. We allow sin and temptations to be our pleasures. We find our worth in what we do and what we have accomplished. We take comfort, security and faith in our family and friends and other things in this world. None of these things leads to strength and security that God wants us to have.

Fear leads to more fear and despair. Sin and temptation lead us away from the love of the Lord found in his Word at his house. Our accomplishments lead us to arrogance, pride and boasting and our faith in family and friends can be destroyed by one argument or disagreement.

That's why, when God says do not be afraid. He is not talking about finding your courage inside of yourself, he is talking about the promises that he gives. It is about what God has already done for you and the gracious promises he makes to you. You have no reason to be afraid as you look ahead at your life as a Christian. God has made you the same promise that he made Joshua. **I will be with you wherever you go.**

Do you remember those promises that God's makes to you from our instruction together? I will send an offspring of a woman to crush the devil's head. There will be a Savior who suffers and dies to take away all of your sins. I will forgive your wickedness and remember your sins no more. We even have Jesus own words from the cross that he has already done all that is necessary to save you, It is finished. He even tells us that our place in heaven is already prepared for us.

You can be strong and courageous because you have a Savior that promises to be with you as you walk through this world. Jesus promised that wherever his Word is, there he is. He's right here, right now..... with you. Jesus promised that he is with those who carry his Word and tell others. That means he is with you because you carry that Word and are sharers of that Word. God promises that he has plans for you to prosper, protect and defend you wherever you go in your life. These promises are sealed in the blood of Christ and are confirmed in the empty tomb.

Knowing that God is with us providing what we need makes many parts of life easier. If I don't make it into the school I want... God is still with me, working it out. If a loved one passes away..... God is still with me to give me strength and faith to continue. If I make really bad decisions which affect my life.....God is there to forgive me of all of my sins.

Today you are being confirmed in your faith. This is something that all the adult members of Summerlin Lutheran church have been asked to do. But even this is not about you. You are going to make a public declaration of what God the Holy Spirit has already done for you. God the Holy Spirit has already worked faith in your heart which believes that you have a Savior who loves and forgives you all your sins. Through the Holy Spirit we also believe that heaven is ours. This is the same faith that that looks to God as the source of our strength and courage.

The old saying goes, this is the first day of the rest of your life. There may be a few times when we think that in our life: starting college, graduating college, changing jobs, a new career. Many think that confirmation is an ending. In one way it is. You will no longer meet with pastor in a special class once a week for an hour or so. You might be happy about that because Pastor's jokes get old, but really confirmation is a beginning. It is the starting blocks for the rest of your life of faith.

It is not mom and dad that are making the promises for you. You are making a personal promise to God to be faithful to him. It is not mom and dad that are forcing you to go to church and Bible Study. As we confessed last week, we are gladly hearing and learning his Word. That does not mean that we will always get

it right. Our lives will be filled with ups and downs. Yet, as we continue to cling to our God in faith, he will be with us through his Word to help us to continue to grow in faith, seek his forgiveness and know his love.

It is through this Word, that God will build us up in faith so that we are not just making promises which are here today and forgotten tomorrow. Through that Word, God will build us up in faith to be strong and courageous in faith, everyday. Amen