

2014 March 23 Crossing the “Transition” River (slide)

Scripture; Joshua 1:1-9
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Introduction

Today’s message is designed to help us more effectively deal with our time of transition. Transitions in our lives take many forms, e.g. we transition from high school to university, we transition from single to married, we transition from having no children to having children. These are transition times in our lives. Our transition as a church here at OIC is a little different from those I mentioned. Dan Ellrick has left, Joseph is covering the pastor’s post for a few months and soon I’ll take on the role of interim pastor. The term interim pastor seems so temporary but isn’t everything in life really temporary? Even the very length of our days seems rather temporary when you compare it to eternity.

I remember a time in my life when I was a small boy when I went through a period of transition. I was 7 years old. Our family had a summer home on a lake and my father had taught my 2 brothers and I how to swim. As we each got old enough, my dad encouraged us to swim across the lake. This lake seemed quite wide to me when I was only 7 years old and to swim across it seemed to be a daunting task. Finally the day came and I asked my father if I could try. I was a bit nervous and some fear entered my heart but my father encouraged me again and we jumped into the water and I began to swim. The water was maybe 50 meters deep and the distance to the other side of the lake was probably like travelling from here to the 7-11. With my father swimming beside me I continued on and finally after about one half hour we reached the other side and my father hugged me and then my father said ‘let’s take the road back to where we started’ and he talked to me about the necessity to face our fears in life.

Today our Scripture text is Joshua 1:1-9 (SLIDE)

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ ^[a]servant, saying, ² “Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³ Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. ⁵ No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous; ^[b] be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may ^[c] have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may ^[d] be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will ^[e] have success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

As we examine this passage we can see a parallel between the Israelites and OIC.

The Israelites were about to cross the Jordan River.

SLIDE OF JOSHUA AND ISRAELITES

and we are crossing the Transition River.

SLIDE OF OIC CONGREGATION

So, henceforth, whenever we see the term Jordan River in this passage, let's compare that to us crossing the Transition River. Let's dissect our understanding of this passage into 3 parts.

#1 Our reality (verses 1 and 2) (SLIDE)

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' ^[a]servant, saying, ² "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.

God tells Joshua that Moses is dead and that you, Joshua, are now the new leader. Fortunately Dan Ellrick is still alive and Joseph is sitting right over there. Just as God told Joshua to get the Israelites ready, He's telling us to get ready as well. I know it can be a little unsettling. I'll be the third pastor in 3 months here. Joshua had 40 years to get ready. I'll have 8 months. My personal reality is this: this is the biggest challenge of my life but God gives me an adrenaline rush and I look forward to the challenge. My reality is also this: that I don't speak Japanese that well but I don't intend to speak with you in Japanese or English. I'm going to speak to you with my heart. I want to tell you that change is inevitable and we are going to go through this together. As much as things change for us, some things remain the same. God is still on the throne, there is still only one way to heaven. The Word of God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. Mark 13:31). (SLIDE)

We as a church, however, need to be like a new wineskin... ready to receive new ideas. The reality for us at OIC is that this is a new season. Ecclesiastes 3:2 says

3 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every ^[a]event under heaven— A time to give birth and a time to die; (SLIDE)

Says there is a time to die and time to be born. We have to be like a newborn church in a new season. We can't simply hang onto the past if we're ever going to move forward. The reality for us at OIC is as we cross the transition river, some things will change, so let's get ready.

#2 Our reassurance (verses 3 -5) (SLIDE)³

Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. ⁵ No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

God promised Joshua that everywhere they placed their feet in the Promised Land, God will give them that territory. It's really a small portion compared to the territory that OIC has from God. We have the entire world arriving at our doorsteps every Sunday. God calls us to be the light of the world

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a ^[a]hill cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14). (SLIDE)

We are also ambassadors

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. II Corinthians 5:20) (SLIDE)

We have the reassurance that God will not leave us nor forsake us Hebrews 13:5b

He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," (Hebrews 13:5). (NO SLIDE)

What a responsibility we have!! God made this same promise to Joshua, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Sometimes we forget all the promises God makes to us. Here's a few of them. Psalm 46:1,2 ,

1 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in ^[a]trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change

And though the mountains slip into the heart of the ^[a]sea; (NO SLIDE),

Philippians 4:19

¹⁹ And my God will supply ^[a]all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (NO SLIDE)

Lamentations 3;22,23

The LORD's lovingkindnesses ^[a]indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail. *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.* (SLIDE) .

So let's make every effort to understand the reassurance God gives us and as we cross the transition river we can be assured that God is going with us and will be with us on the other side.

#3 Our responsibility (verses 6-9) (SLIDE)

⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous; ^[b] be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may ^[c] have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may ^[d] be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will ^[e] have success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

The secret to doing God's work and being successful at it is to do it God's way. You know, hell has a national anthem. It's called "I did it my way". God never intends for us to do things our way. God tells Joshua, before you go, get your attitude right. What attitude did He want Joshua to have? He tells him to be bold, be strong, not weak and cowardly. He wants Joshua to be full of faithful courage. He is our strength and God knows when our hearts are right. Now he says.. open our Bible.. the only system of absolutes we have ... psalm 119:105

⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path. (SLIDE)

I remember when I was just a new Christian and the pastor of our church asked me if I would be the youth leader and I was quite surprised he would ask me because I told him I knew very little about the bible. He asked me what I knew; I told him Moses was in the bulrushes, Jonah was in the fish, Jesus was on the cross. He told me to do my best and go forward. I wasn't going to let the teenagers know more than I knew about the Bible so I began to study God's Word and I fell in love with the system of absolutes God had given me. Have you ever hugged your Bible?

So the slide tells us God's Word is a lamp unto my feet. God says don't deviate from it and you will be successful. So as we cross the transition river, let's get our attitude right and use God's Word. And then, we will be successful. It starts with attitude and it's fueled with God's Word, where we find encouragement. O taste and see that the Lord is God.

O taste and see that the LORD is good;
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! (Psalm 34:8) (SLIDE),

If we keep His instruction, when we arrive we know He'll say 'well done, good and faithful servants of OIC.'. Our responsibility is to do it God's way. Their inheritance was the Promised Land. Our inheritance... eternity with God. No more pain, no more sorrow, no more tears. But, there is someone who wants us to fail. Satan wants to make waves in the Transition River as we cross. Some of us don't realize that Satan has schemes.

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes (Ephesians 6:11) (SLIDE)

Conclusion

The reality is this... today is March 23. We all know where we are and what has transpired and we stand at the shore of the transition river. The reassurance is God is with us and wants us to succeed. How did it work out for the Israelites? They made it. So can we. Our responsibility.. be bold, be strong, for the Lord our God is with us. Let's live in the resurrection power of our Lord, directed by His Word, comforted by His Holy

Spirit. God is with us. He's waiting for us on the other side, so let's be bold, be strong and get it done for God.