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Crossing Jordan
Joshua 1:1-18
February 7, 2016, Jeff Geremo

[Someone else to read the following]

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Joshua 1 (NLT)

1 After the death of Moses the Lord’s servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant. He said, 2 “Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them.

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3 I promise you what I promised Moses: ‘Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you—4 from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.’

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5 No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you. 6 “Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.

[5]

7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. 8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

[6]

9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” 10 Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, 11 “Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

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12 Then Joshua called together the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He told them, 13 “Remember what Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you: ‘The Lord your God is giving you a place of rest. He has given you this land.’

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14 Your wives, children, and livestock may remain here in the land Moses assigned to you on the east side of the Jordan River. But your strong warriors, fully armed, must lead the other tribes across the Jordan to help them conquer their territory. Stay with them 15 until the Lord gives them rest, as he has given you rest, and until they, too, possess the land the Lord your God is giving them. Only then may you return and settle here on the east side of the Jordan River in the land that Moses, the servant of the Lord, assigned to you.”

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16 They answered Joshua, "We will do whatever you command us, and we will go wherever you send us. 17 We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. And may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. 18 Anyone who rebels against your orders and does not obey your words and everything you command will be put to death. So be strong and courageous!"

[10]

Many of you know the story of my life by now. At least the parts I've told you. I was raised in a Christian home. My parents tried to instill in us the fact of God's trustworthiness. Things of God were the topic of our every day conversation. It was natural. When things were going well, it was "Praise the Lord!" When things were difficult it was, "Don't worry, God is trustworthy," and we would call out to God together as a family.

Somehow though, in my adolescent years I became very ashamed of my Christian heritage. I told you a few weeks ago that we moved around a lot and I ended up feeling like an outsider wherever we went. I felt different than everyone, and I desperately wanted to be liked, so much so that I went undercover. I hid the fact that my family was Christian.

At church I called myself a Christian, and at school I was, well, nobody. Throughout high school and for several years after I had a very good friend named Garrett. We did everything together. We went fishing and hunting. We played sports together. We were almost inseparable. And I even kept my little secret hidden from him for years.

One day Garrett and I were driving in my 1967 Plymouth Sport Fury. I came to a sudden stop because the person in front of me slammed on his brakes for some reason. And when I screeched to a halt something devastating happened that would forever change how Garrett would look at me.

The Sunday before this I had made a critical error. After church our family would usually go to lunch with someone from the church and I would hide my Bible under the passenger seat so nobody would see it when my car was parked. Well, when I slammed on my brakes that big black King James Bible came zipping out from under the seat right between Garrett's feet. I was mortified. All the blood rushed from my face and I turned pale. I was caught. I looked at the Bible. Garrett looked at the big black book. And there we sat in an uncomfortable silence for what seemed like a very long time. My heart was beating. My cover was blown.

Garrett sat staring at the big black book, and then turned to me. Then he picked it up and looked over at me again and I immediately tried to change the subject. "Look, a flock of turtles." He didn't bite.

I could almost see the gears in his brain churning away trying to figure this out. It was obviously very incongruous to him. "What's this?" He asked incredulously. "ummm...it's the Holy Bible," I replied in a mocking tone, trying to sound cool. That was all that was said. I grabbed the Bible from his hands and threw it in the back seat. And from that moment on our relationship changed. Garrett knew I was a fraud. We started to drift apart and the times spent together became infrequent until we had no more contact.

Several years passed and the Lord got hold of my heart and began to show me that life is not just about the here and now. He showed me he has a job for me to do and I could no longer go

on living the lifestyle I had become accustomed to. I needed to get off the fence. I needed to get unstuck. I needed to get off the bench and get in the game.

Well, I contacted Garrett after several years and we got together and I apologized for being a fraud. I asked him if I could share with him what I believed. And I talked to him about how Jesus had changed my my life, while he sat in stunned silence, hanging on my every word.

He was so taken by my turn around that he asked if he could come to church with me. He was living with a girl who was raised Catholic and he wondered if it was okay to bring her to church too because he had heard that Protestants persecuted Catholics and vice versa. I told him we don't burn each other at the stake anymore and they are both very welcome to come.

Garrett never did receive Christ as far as I know. But, he now has the seed of the gospel planted in his heart, and maybe someone else will come along and give it a little water and sunshine.

Fast forward a few more years to my theological school in Manitoba. It was my second or third year and the school began a new program in which all of the students were required to go into Winnipeg en masse to go "witnessing." When this was announced my heart started to beat so fast and hard that I thought I was going to go into cardiac arrest. I had never gone cold witnessing before. I was scared spitless. Do you want to know what I did to overcome my fear? I hid. Yes, that's right. Man called by God goes into hiding — again. I told you these two stories to let you know that if you are afraid of God's call on your life, you are not alone.

I have been there. Well, God has taught me since then that my fears are really unsubstantiated. He says in his Word, "**Perfect love casts out all fear.**" I went from being afraid to let anyone know that I was a Christian to being an obnoxious Bible thumper. I went to the other end of the spectrum and I probably scared more people away from Jesus than I enticed towards him.

I thought that the verse in 1 Peter where it says always be ready to give an answer meant that I was to have all the answers and make "sure that everyone knew it. 'Hit them with the truth' became my motto. I wrongly believed that if I could beat them in a debate about faith they would happily say the 'sinner's prayer' with me and I could put another notch on my pistol grip.

Well, you will be happy to know, I'm sure, that when I am talking about doing the work of an evangelist, I am not talking about this kind of evangelism.

God's call on us is, not so much that we would become a church who goes out evangelizing, but that Campbell River Baptist Church would become a church who so lives up to the call of God on our lives, that we would allow the Holy Spirit to powerfully change us so others would see Jesus in us and impact our city with his love. The people in your life right now are the people God has called you to love and serve. By so doing you will reflect the character of Christ and the "hope to which you are called."

And seeing that hope they will ask you where that hope comes from. *That* is when you open your mouth and be ready to give an answer for the hope to which you have been called. Last week at the potluck Trish LeFrance shared how her brother noticed a change in her which led to an open door to talk about her new faith in Jesus. That is what God has called us to.

If you aren't there yet, please turn in your Bibles to **Joshua 1**.

Did you notice when the passage was read earlier that there are a few recurring themes? Some words and phrases were repeated several times. ***I have given it to you; possess, or possession; be careful to obey; be strong and courageous.***

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1. The first theme is the phrase ***"I have given it to you."*** It, or a similar theme is repeated eight times in this short passage.

Sometimes it says it in the present continuous tense, such as, ***"I am giving it to you."*** And other times in the past perfect tense, ***"I have given it to you."*** In other words, it is a done deal. "I have already given the land to you. I have decided in my infinite wisdom," says the LORD, "that this land is yours."

When God declares something to be true it is something that can be banked on. God gave Joshua and the people of Israel a mission, and that mission was to take the land he had already given them. Now remember this is the second generation of Israelites since God liberated them from slavery in Egypt. The first generation, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, were left to wander in the wilderness for forty years because of unbelief, which they demonstrated by whining and complaining.

And so now, God says, it is time to go and take the land I have already given to you. This was the same land God had first promised their forefather Abraham in Genesis 12, and then to Isaac, Jacob, and then to Moses. And now, finally, after hundreds of years, God says "take it."

How many opportunities to share the love of Jesus with someone do we pass by each day? I would venture to guess many. God gave me Garret in my younger days to love and serve, and I missed an opportunity. He has given me countless opportunities since to share the love of Jesus with those around me, and I am working on being more sensitive to his Spirit living in me so I will be sensitive to his nudgings and take those opportunities.

Last Sunday we had a Remember and Celebrate service with potluck lunch afterwards. Several people shared how God has been changing their hearts and working in their lives as they surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. God gave them divine appointments. He said, "trust me." And, for those of you who were there, you heard several people share how they have been learning to trust Jesus and allow him to change their hearts and as that's happening others have been noticing the change and wondering what was going on.

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The Bible says in **Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)**,

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

The question for us this morning is, do we believe God's Word? It says he has prepared these things in advance for us to do, and that we should walk in them. We have heard various people at CRBC test this and find out that it is, in fact, true. God has literally, not figuratively, prepared for each of us here this morning, in advance, good works for us to do. And he says, ***"we should walk in them."***

In other words, **“Take it.”** Take those opportunities to love those around you, to give a smile to someone who is having a bad day, to show mercy to those who need mercy, to extend grace to those who need grace, to help those in need, to serve your neighbours, to pray for someone who needs a touch from Jesus, to invite them to be a part of your lives, **so that** they might discover the hope Jesus has given you, and wants them to experience.

God gave Joshua and the people of Israel a mission. They were to take the land that he had already given them. Jesus gave us a mission 2000 years ago. And we all know what that mission is.

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In **Matthew 28:19–20 (NLT)** Jesus said,

19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

That is our mission. “Make disciples by teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded us.” And what he has taught us to do is to love each other unconditionally. Love God, love People.

2. The next word that recurs several times is the word, **“possess” or “possession (vs. 15).”**

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This implies that it is not going to be done for us. God has given it to us, but we have to take it. We have to possess it.

Benny and Maggie McGrath have been given a great opportunity to possess a new home, compliments of Habitat for Humanity. They have been chosen to be the recipients if they choose to accept it. They are setting up a covenant of sorts with Habitat for Humanity. Habitat is putting together a team who is willing to do much of the work and others who are willing to donate supplies. But Benny and Maggie have a part to play too. They have to put in five hundred hours of sweat equity into the build and gather a team of people who are willing to gather around them and help them out. Habitat is not going to just gift them with a house. They have to take possession of it by doing some hard work.

It’s similar with the call of God on our lives. He has prepared things in advance for us to do. He has prepared divine appointments and opportunities for us. But, if we do not take them we do not get the benefit of them and neither does the person who was to be the benefactor of the good work.

Now, we must remember that we are not talking about earning our salvation here. That is a free gift that we cannot earn. It is given to us freely. What we are talking about is the work Jesus has called us to while we are waiting for his return. God has given these things to us in advance, but we have to take possession of them. We have to walk in them.

I believe that 2016 is the year God wants us to “take the land.” I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to die wandering in the wilderness before we get the chance to “cross the Jordan.”

Campbell River Baptist Church is here on the hill for a reason. God has you wherever you are in your life right now for a reason, and it is not to wander aimlessly in the wilderness. It is to walk in the good works he has prepared in advance for you to do.

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3. The next phrase that you see recurring here is, “***Be careful to obey.***”

Verse 8 is probably the most well known verse, and likely many of you have memorized it.

8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

You will notice that this is a formula for success. That sounds good doesn't it! If you are careful to do everything written in this book you will be prosperous and successful. You will have a perfect marriage, perfect kids, perfect relationships, a perfect business, and a large bank account. And, to top it all off, you will be good looking.

No, that's not what this says. This success formula is not for getting what *you* want out of life. **It is for fulfilling the task that God has given you.** When the Israelites were camped out at Mt. Sinai God gave the law to Moses to, in turn, give to the Israelites so they would know how to live in the land God had given them, so they would be successful in living together in the land, so others would see the unity and community and want to be a part of it.

If you are careful to obey everything God has commanded you, you will have success at what he has called you to do. That is a promise you can bank on. Friends, God will use you in the place where you are. He has prepared good works for you to do. He has prepared divine appointments for you. If you are careful to obey him, he will give you success in them.

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4. The next recurring phrase or theme is “***Be strong and courageous.***”

Verses 6, 7, & 9. Let's read those.

6 “Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.

[17]

7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. ***8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.***

[18]

9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Three times in four verses God commands Joshua, “***Be strong and courageous.***” And then, another similar command, “***Do not be frightened, and do not be discouraged.***”

The Vancouver Canucks are not exactly doing too well right now. I don't want to rub salt in your wounds because of last night's game. And I can't really gloat because the Flames are just

behind the Canucks in the standings. I'm no expert, but I am assuming if they have any chance at all of making the playoffs they are going to have to spend most of their time across their opponents' blue line. Imagine you are in the Canucks dressing room between periods and coach Willie Desjardins is giving them a pep talk.

"Men, it's scary out there. I've heard the Flames don't like us very much and they want to put that little black disc in our net. So, I would recommend that you stay over on our side of the blue line and protect Ryan. As a matter of fact, for those of you who are feeling scared you can keep safe by staying on the bench. It's safe there."

It doesn't work that way in hockey and it doesn't work that way in God's kingdom. Be strong and courageous. Get off the bench and into the action. Why does God say we should be strong and courageous?

Verse 5 & 9:

[19]

5 No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.

9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

These are the words of God, not just for Joshua, but also for us at Campbell River Baptist Church for the work he has called us to. Here's what Paul said to the Corinthians.

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2 Corinthians 9:8 (NLT)

8 And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

What has God called us to? He has called us to take those who are around us from spiritual pre-birth to spiritual maturity in Christ. That is our mission. He has prepared these things in advance for us to do. He has given us everything we need to do these good works, according to 2 Corinthians 9:8.

And now, we can choose to do them, or we can stay "on this side of the Jordan." The choice is ours. I don't know about you, but I don't want to be wandering around in the wilderness for another 40 years.

I want to enter into the promise God has for me. And I know that's what you want too. I know the fear some of you have. I have experienced the same fear. But God has promised to go ahead of us and to never leave us or forsake us.

In verses 10 to 15 Joshua started to prepare the people for crossing the Jordan, and he filled them in on God's plan for them. And asked, basically, "Are you with me?" And they said a resounding, "Yes, we are with you. Let's go and take the land God has given us."

God is doing a work in and through us at CRBC right now. I am hearing many people tell stories of how God is changing their hearts and how he is using them to love those around them. People are beginning to stand up and take notice.

I have a suggestion to make. Adrian is putting together a team to walk in the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser to raise awareness of the plight of the homeless in Campbell River and to raise funds to help them. I would like to use this event to gather a huge team of CRBCers to would walk together. Not just to raise money for the homeless, but that it would be much bigger than that. That we would walk prayerfully giving our city to God, praying that he would open doors, that he would set up divine appointments for us and that he would give us the courage to walk through those doors and accept those appointments so he can transform our city for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus. That is God's call on us as a church.

Wouldn't that be a great testimony if we did that? And if you are not able to physically walk, you could support the team by sponsoring someone. And if you can't do that you could support the team by praying for us. God is at work. I have never been so excited in all my years of ministry as I am about this coming year. God is doing something in and through CRBC and we all get to be a part of it.

Friends, Jesus didn't die and then rise from the dead and give us his Spirit so we could sit in our comfortable pews on Sunday mornings. He has called us to get off the bench and go across the blue line, and as we take those risks for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus, he will do something beyond what we ask or imagine. Who is with me?

Communion



Crossing Jordan
Joshua 1
Week of February 7th, 2016

Objective of this study: To understand God's heart to empower us to reach our city for Jesus, to open our eyes to see what he is doing and join him.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Isaiah 41:8-14** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome/Word/Work (60 - 90 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Back in Genesis 12, God called Abraham (Abram at that time) and told him he was going to make him into a great nation, that he would give them a land from which they would **bless all the nations of the earth** so the whole world would have a chance to be a part of God's family. In Joshua 1, almost seven hundred years later, Israel is on the east side of the Jordan River getting ready to cross over and take the land God had chosen for them.
3. Read Joshua 1 looking for all the recurring words, phrases and themes. What are they?
4. Why could the Israelites be confident of their success?
5. Read John 15:9-17; Ephesians 2:10; and 2 Corinthians 9:8. What has God called us to? What would success look like?
6. The Israelites were tempted to let fear paralyze them from God's call. What fears tempt you?
7. As we build relationships with the people in our lives the Holy Spirit will nudge us to love and serve them in specific ways. He will provide divine appointments. What sorts of things can we do to develop a sensitivity to him? How do you feel you are doing with this? Remember, we are all in process, learning to walk with Jesus.
8. What does all of this mean for us specifically in Campbell River? What can you do as individuals and as a Growth Group to fulfill God's call? Brainstorm together.
9. Spend the rest of the time praying that God would set up divine appointments for you to love and serve the people in your sphere of influence.