

Jesus our Joshua (2)

God's Word Endures.

"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you." Josh. 1:7.

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do you will save both yourself and your hearers." 1 Tim 4:16. N.I.V.

The people had known no other leader. Moses had led them for forty long, hazardous, difficult years. Now the future awaited them. They were on the edge of the new land without Moses to guide them. What would the new leader do?

As God appoints Joshua he does not say, *"It's time for 'progressives' with fresh ideas or its time to be more creative than Moses and to do things differently."* No, God says that the words of Moses are still relevant. They were right for Israel's life in the desert, and they would be right for the people's life with God in the Promised Land.

It was not that Moses had taken lessons on crowd control, good ideas or new political innovation. Moses had been God's spokesman. He had spoken the words God had given him to lead and teach. To listen to Moses in the desert had been to hear God's word. Now although Moses had died, circumstances had changed but this was no time to turn back like their fathers had done or to dig their graves in the sand dunes. The people needed to relearn that the Word of God was unique, it was sacred, it would endure, it would not pass away. It was not to be adjusted or modified.

During the 19th century the school of Higher Criticism arose and introduced a way of studying that undermined faith in the unique revelation of what had been called the 'Holy Bible'. When we approach the Bible through the eyes of literary science alone without the Holy Spirit, the backbone of the church folds like a pack of cards. By the late 1950s the church in Australia was poised on the edge of a new frontier. It faced the challenge of what has been called the permissive sexual revolution that extended through the 1960s---but unlike Joshua and his friends it was powerless to resist the advance of a new destructive ideology that undermined faith in the Bible. Today the survival of Western Christianity is at stake. Secular humanist progressive versus traditional or Biblical values. God's promises were vital for Israel as they faced the future and we need to recover our reverence and respect for God's word, his special revealed promises to his people amid an increasingly hostile environment.

A Right Time.

v 1-2 *"Now proceed to cross Jordan"*

There was a period of mourning, a sense of loss with Moses's death. Many Christians are raised and nurtured within the provisions of a particular church institution, but God is not confined to one particular tradition, institution or historical denomination. God speaks to his people across the generations and through the ages. In this case it was through his agent Joshua.

v 2. ***Now arise, (be on the move) proceed to cross the Jordon.***

We experience grief whenever radical change occurs in our lives, this may be when a relationship is fractured or lost, or when we feel let down by the church. However, the work of God continues. One commentator says, *“Let not weeping hinder sowing; nor the withering of the most useful hands be the weakening of ours; for, when God has work to do he will either find or make instruments fit to carry it on.”* Like Israel in the wilderness there are times when the church institution may be misguided but God lives on and through history always raises a new expression of love. Similar to the Old Testament law, our traditions are temporary,-- a steppingstone along the way. We belong to Christ alone. Christ is our Joshua and he does for us what no institution can do.

v 5 Clear Instruction and Assurance

There was clear instruction from the beginning. Be confident. ***“I will be with you; I will not fail you (drop, abandon, leave you in the lurch) or forsake you.”***

v 6 ***“Be strong and of good courage.”*** (be courageous, valiant, resolute.)

v 7 ***“being careful to do according to the law”*** (be attentive) that my servant Moses gave you---Uncertainty marked the future but there was an unmistakable assurance.

v 9 ***“Do not be afraid, discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”***

Today the Lord still promises to be with us in this special way. Jesus, the new Joshua, the Son of God has fulfilled the old law and we know that as we approach the Bible in the right way the Holy Spirit helps us to hear God’s voice. Our lives now depend on His special presence and the unique, trustworthy Word of God in the same way that the people of Israel utterly depended on their new leader Joshua.

Discussion:

Like the Israelites, Christians today face a new frontier, many threatening changes and an uncertain future. Recall and discuss Jesus final promise to his disciples (Math 28; 18-20) and how we can take it to heart by practising his presence in the routine of our daily lives.

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