

EASTSIDE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
SUNDAY, AUGUST 22, 2021
SERMON: PROMISES &
TEXT: JOSHUA 1:3-9

Are you familiar with the “double-edged” sword? Swords have been around since 3000 BC. By the middle-ages, double-edges swords, like the longsword, were very common. Unlike a sword that has a single edge – the double-edge sword can be more destructive but also poses a greater risk to the wielder. If you swing a two-edged sword in combat and hit something hard enough to cause the sword to bounce off the object, the sword could come back and injure the one bearing it.

Over time, the “double-edged” sword has found its way into our English grammar. When something is called a “double-edged” sword, we are figuratively saying that something has both good and bad consequences.

An example of this is the statement:

The tongue is a double-edged sword; it can raise your status or secure your demise. Be wary of what you say.

Or

Fear is such a double edged sword. You need some fear to keep you on track. But too much fear paralyzes you.

And one of my favorite from superhero pop-culture is the words of wisdom from Peter Parker’s (aka. Spiderman) Uncle Ben:

"With great power comes great responsibility"

This last one has been around in some way, shape, or form for many years, even centuries. Luke 12:48 (the Parable of the Faithful Servant) Jesus say:

"...When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required."

Today we continue on in Joshua. Last week we saw how the people were on the brink of entering the Promised Land. Joshua was in mourning at the death of Moses and God intervened reminding Joshua that there was work to be done. In our reading today, God not only encourages Joshua to action, but God makes some promises to Joshua and the people that were extraordinary in nature. These promises also come with some conditions.

Let's start with our scripture reading today – Joshua 1:3-9:

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^[a] in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.' 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. 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. 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."

The gospel message has always been a "two-edged" sword. In any contract there is always a benefit for fulfilling the contract and a punishment for breaking it. God's has always expressed his desire for relationship and his love for us through his covenants or contracts. Over the years, I think many in the church, pastors and laypeople alike, have not fully explained what it means to "be saved." We emphasized the "benefits" of believing in Jesus, the fact that salvation is a free gifts (which it is!) to the extent that we forgot

to tell people of the responsibilities that are taken on when we become Children of God. The gift is absolutely free...but there are conditions and responsibilities that exist!

Today I want us to have a clear understanding of the benefits and the conditions of accepting and receiving the promises of God. Let's look at what it takes to claim God's promises

1. Claim God's will for your life.

For Joshua and the Children of Israel, the incredible, generous promise of God was for their own land. A land described as flowing with "milk and honey." A land, if they were faithful and obedient, would be a joy to live in and establish. AS you read the book of Joshua, you will see that there were too different set of boundaries for the people. One was the set that they historically lived in. These boundaries grew and shrank many times over history. The second set was the boundary that God had envisioned for them. The boundary that the people never realized because they were disobedient and broke their covenant with God.

For us, today, it is probably not a promise of land to live in but rather a promise of being able to reside in the will of God. There is no greater peace, even in a chaotic, turbulent world, than knowing you are living in the center of God's will. How do you live in God's will? Even though that could be another separate sermon series, here are a few things to think about:

- A. **Read your bibles!** – You can't discern God's will if you do not know His Word!
- B. **Pray!** – How can you know God's will if you don't communicate and listen.
- C. **Seek out the opinion of godly individuals!** – When you seek guidance from those you recognize as growing, mature, Christians, it is amazing how the choices you have to make will become focused and confirmed.

- D. **Acknowledge "locked" doors!** – Does it seem that the doors you need to be open to proceed always get slammed shut? Be prepared to accept a door that keeps closing. Don't fall into the trap of "forcing" God's will because that is what you want!
- E. **Just do it!** – Have you been sincerely diligent as you have read your bibles, prayed, talked with others, and the doors you need aren't being closed? You are still worried about doing God's will? If this is the cases, go forward and do what you want to do. You don't have to feel bad about pursuing something, even if it may seem self-centered. If you sincerely strive to be obedient to God...perhaps He wants to bless you be giving you a desire of your heart. Psalm 37:3-6 reminds us:

**³ Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
⁴ Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's desires.
⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you.
⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday
sun.**

2. Claim the power and presence of the Lord!

David reminded us in Ps. 23:4 that:

**Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.**

Deuteronomy 31:6 reminds us:

So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you.”

God neither plays games nor is He malicious. God is LOVE! If God prompts you into service for Him in some way, shape, or form, He will provide you with all that you need. God does not give us a challenge and then leaves us to swim or drown. All Christians have the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the one who guides and directs us as Jesus did with his disciples. Be bold and confident that God is beside you!

God's presence brings peace in the good and the bad times. The promise of God's presence is not the absence of trials. Trials are to be expected. Jesus was very open and honest about the life of a disciple. Our faith will be tested, we will be tempted to give in or give up. As we claim the presence of God in our lives, we live on a firm foundation that will not crumble.

3. Claim God's Prosperity and Success!

God wants you to be successful and God wants you to be prosperous! BUT godly prosperity and success has been redefined by religious charlatans who claim cosmetic, shallow, worldly success and prosperity has to do with physical health and worldly wealth. God is not in the business of tummy tucks, nose jobs, and making life easy. Success and prosperity is found in taking up our crosses and following Him and realizing that the first will be last and the last shall be first! When we allow God to transform us and use us to meet needs of those who are hurting and in pain, then we have true success. When we see those fumbling in the dark, looking for truth, and they discover God's love. When we see the Kingdom of God grow...THIS is prosperity! This is success!

CONDITIONS

We have looked at the promises of God that can be claimed...but what are the conditions that we must follow?

I. OPEN THE BOOK!

Are you one of those people who don't like to use instructions to put something together? You think you know what to do but wind up with 14 extra parts and a table that was supposed to be a sofa? God has given a guide to follow – why wouldn't we? God was clear to Joshua in vs. 8:

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.

2. OBEY GOD

Jesus said it very simply in John 14:15:

“If you love me, keep my commands.

Life is tough and at times it isn't fair. We have bought into a societal message that says somehow we are owed something. This is particularly sad when we take that lie into our worship of God as the Church. We far too often want the good stuff without the sacrifice. We want to be able to live like the devil – maybe not full time, but surely God wouldn't care if we deviate from His will every now and then? Then we come to church and expect God to bless us, even in our disobedience. We need to remember that if we have done something wrong and are paying the price for our disobedience and sin – that is not God's fault. God does provide a way out for us. He does not write us off for our disobedience. 1 John 1:9 reminds us of the powerful truth:

⁹ If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.

3. BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE!

Paul reminds Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7:

⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

Why are we so scared to be the Church? We fear the world, we fear governments, we fear other religions and we tend to fear each other? I you are studying your bibles and obeying your Lord...guess what? You don't have to live in fear!

Again Paul encourages us in Philippians 4:6-7:

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Go back and re-read our scripture lesson today. God did not come to Joshua on the eve of entering the promised land and tried to be warm and cuddly with him. God did not encourage Joshua with a suggest but issued a command. Joshua was now God's commander and Joshua's marching orders were:

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.

CONCLUSION

Promises and conditions! We must put behind us the idea that God does everything we want, when we want it immediately. God has called us to the long game. It is a life of commitment and obedience. It is a life of being tested by everything that the world can throw at us. It is an understanding that our God has conquered death, sin, and logically he has conquered the world. As you experience the ups and downs, tragedies and victories, remind yourself that God has promised to go ahead of us. If you stay close

to God, He will stay close to you and nothing can steal you away from His love. As his representatives we must claim our families and neighborhoods as being promised lands for the glory of God. May we always claim God's promises as with live up to our end of the contract.

May we "Be strong and courageous...!"

Let's pray