



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

What Now?

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Joshua 1:1-9

Clint Pressley

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, ² "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵ No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good 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 be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

(Pastor prays)

Frank Salano was a Frenchman as they are known in southwest Mississippi. They are commonly called "Cajun." Frank was a good friend and fine Christian man. He was a leader in the small church I served in Amite County, Mississippi. He was rugged and resourceful; he trained cutting

horses. That's the kind that you used to herd cattle and display in rodeos. He would eat anything, boudin and gumbo, which might have muskrat or alligator in it! But there was one thing he made that I would eat and that was lemon meringue pie.

He called me one day to come and get one of the pies he had made. I was glad to visit as he had been under the weather and it was good to have him up and around. While I was there though, tragedy struck. He slumped over and crumpled onto the floor. I got down there to try and hold his head up. His wife Bonnie called 911 and the paramedics got there and pronounced him dead where he lay. It was a pulmonary thrombosis. And I remember the first thing Bonnie said to me was, "What am I going to do?"

I imagine that's how Joshua felt in this opening text. I imagine that's how some of you feel even now: shellshocked, untethered and not certain of the way forward. If that's you then you are going to find something good in the book of Joshua. It is such an important book and tied so closely to the first five books. Even the opening in verse 2 that says Moses is dead brings up the question what do we do now?

The book of Joshua deals with one very important stage in God's good plan to save the world. You see, the people of Israel had not yet made it into the land of promise. Their leader and liberator Moses is now dead and they must get into the Promised Land and settle it to prepare for the coming of another Joshua, Jesus Christ, who would be born in that land, preach in that land, be crucified in that land and be raised from the dead in that same land.

And this book is about God keeping His promises and taking care of His people. The people couldn't be paralyzed anymore. It was, by God's grace, time to move forward. Of all the things you'll see in this passage I hope you will believe that...

In Christ, We Keep Going Forward

How do we do that?

We can't live in the past

This is a history book, and I do love history, but we can't live in the rearview mirror. God has put air in your lungs and light in your eyes and, no matter the challenge, God's people keep moving forward. That seems to be what God is saying to Joshua in verse 2: Moses, my servant, is dead.

Yes, it was hard. Yes, it was unnerving. And, yes, it called into question what the future looks like. But God is now calling Joshua to step up and lead, to “arise.”

As one preacher said it, when God puts down one instrument, He picks up another. Moses was a titanic figure in the history of God's people. He confronted Pharaoh, led the people, performed miracles, spent 40 days on the mountain and was given The 10 Commandments. Joshua would never live up to that even in their titles. Moses is the servant of the Lord. Joshua is Moses' assistant. He's not even the regional manager. He's the assistant to the regional manager! And yet, God says to him that the time is over, a new day has dawned. You've got to get up and get moving. You've got work to do. Whatever misgivings you have about the past, be done with that. It's just like driving a car. It's good to check your rearview mirror now and then but the way forward is in front of you. Even his name, Joshua—is the very first person in the Bible to have the name of God in his own name— “Joshua” means “YHWH saves.” This is pointing us to the true and better Joshua that would die on the cross in the place of sinners, and he would do that in this yet-unconquered promised land.

In Christ we keep moving forward. We can't live in the past.

We can't live being intimidated.

Moses is dead and now everything is on Joshua. His task is monumental. He's got to lead the people over the Jordan River in flood stage, divide up the land and establish the people on solid moral ground. It would have been terribly intimidating to be the assistant to a leader like Moses. I mean Joshua has seen plenty of action. He fought the Amalekites in Exodus 17. He was on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24. He was one of the 12 spies in Numbers 13-14. He knew Moses. He saw Moses' face shine with the glory of God to such a degree that they put a veil over it. Joshua's face never shined like that.

Moses was a colossal spiritual giant. Joshua was just a faithful hard worker. He was a small man compared to his predecessor. He wasn't a prophet, leader or miracle worker. He didn't meet face to face with God. He was a plain soldier. How easy it is to compare yourself to other people at other times and feel the base insecurity that follows? The tools change but the master's hand is the same. He puts down a hammer and picks up a pair of pliers for a different job. He lays one tool aside and takes another out as he wills. Moses is dead but Joshua is alive. The power is not in the person but in the maker, and the plan is still in place. We worship by the spirit of God and

glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. What are you intimidated by? Insecure about? Anxious over? Could it be that that is a form of self-centeredness? You've forgotten to trust the One who created you, redeemed you at the cross and says, "I will never leave you or forsake you!" We can't live in the past. We can't live being intimidated.

We can't live clamoring for validation.

Let's look at verses 1-2 and see how Moses is described and look at how Joshua is described.

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.

Moses is the servant of the Lord. Joshua is his assistant. Moses is called "Servant of the Lord" 18 times in the Bible, and 14 of those times are right here in Joshua. Joshua won't get that title until the very end of the book after he fulfilled all of his obligations as a leader. Joshua's success will not be in his *ability* but in his *devotion*. Furthermore, he reminds us not to be concerned with titles, recognition or even thanks, as nice as those things are. Isn't that what Paul said in Colossians 3:23? *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, find contentment in where you are and live your life for the Lord, not for men.*

We can't live in fear.

If you read verses 3-4, you see that God has promised to go ahead of Joshua. In fact in verse 3, He speaks in past tense as if to say, "what I'm commanding you to do, I've already done." In verse 4 He gives the border of the Promised Land and it's gigantic. And, frankly, the task seems impossible. Joshua is to lead the people over the Jordan during a flood. You feel like it's impossible. Here's how you're going to get through it: trust.

Trust God's promises. Verse 6 says, *6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.* Be strong and courageous. I'm going to use you to work, to do what I said I was going to do. God has promised to love you, redeem you, sanctify you, use you, comfort you, and to heal and restore you. There's something else here in verses 7-8.

Trust God's word. You will need this now more than ever. Verse 7A says to be disciplined, be careful in what you do. Verse 7B says be committed. Do not turn to the right or to the left, take the Bible seriously and at face value. Verse 7C says to be consistent. Be consistent wherever you go if it's college, work, or just life. Verse 8A says be conversant. This book of the law should not depart from your mouth. It's like an old friend with stories that you love. Verse 8 also says to be saturated in the Word. You shall meditate on it day and night. This is not some eastern mystic meditation. The word literally means to mutter under your breath, saying it to yourself. It means to focus on God's works and the law. Trust God's promises. Trust God's word.

Trust God's presence. Let's look at what God says in verse 5 and again in verse 9. ⁵ *No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.* ⁹ *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.* God said it to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon and Solomon. God says it to His people in Isaiah 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

Those two words "with you." Draw a straight line to the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus the righteous is crucified in the place of sinners, dead and buried; and on the third day God raised Him from the dead. The last thing He said to His church before He left was "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded; and, behold, I am with you."

In Christ, we keep moving forward. We can't live in the past. We can't live being intimidated. We can't live clamoring for validation. We can't live in fear. There is a perfect love that cast out fear and that perfect love is in Jesus.

(Pastor prays)

