

Sermon Outline

“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

HEROES OF THE CITY OF GOD (JOSHUA 4:11-14)

I. “These Are Mediocre Times Mrs Dunn”

II. The Ark of the LORD Passes Over (Joshua 4:11)

- A. All Israel crossed the Jordan.
- B. The time came for the Ark of YHWH and his priests to cross the Jordan.
- C. While the Lord is the first to go into the waters, he is the last to leave the riverbed.
 - 1. This shows us that the Lord is both Vanguard and Rearguard of his people.
 - 2. Isaiah 52:12 speaks of this dual work of the Lord: “...for the LORD will go *before* you, and the God of Israel will be your *rear guard*.”
 - 3. God provides comprehensive protection to his people as they go into war.

***Questions for reflection:** What is the significance of the Lord being the first to go into the waters, and the last to leave the river? What does this say about his care for his people?

III. Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh Pass Over Armed (Joshua 4:12)

- A. 4:12 draws our attention to the sons of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh.
- B. Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh were the tribes that had obtained permission to dwell on the eastern side of the Jordan (Num 32:20-22).
- C. The sons of these tribes “pass over armed before the people of Israel.”
- D. Their actions were “as Moses had told them.”
- E. The phrase “as Moses had told them” sounds a lot like others we heard before:
 - 1. 4:8: “And the people of Israel did *just as* Joshua commanded...”
 - 2. 1:17: “*Just as* we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you...”

- F. Once again, we are reminded that a new Israel has emerged—a new Israel marked by obedience to God’s prophets.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What were the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh allowed to do? (2) What is the significance of the phrase “as Moses had told them”?

IV. YHWH’s 40,000 (Joshua 4:13)

- A. About 40,000 Israelite soldiers pass over before YHWH.
- B. 40,000 is about four divisions of an army.
- C. They were “ready for war.”
- D. They headed to the “plains of Jericho.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What was the size of the Israelite army? (2) What does the phrase “ready for war” tell us about the Israelite troops?

V. The Lord Has Exalted Joshua (Joshua 4:14)

- A. 4:14 is a summary of all that had happened.
- B. 4:14 affirms that God had kept his promise to Joshua (see 3:7).
 - 1. God has exalted Joshua.
 - 2. God has endorsed Joshua as he had endorsed Moses.
- C. The Israelites respond with awe to God’s new supreme prophet-leader—“just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.”
- D. While we do not have the same authority as Joshua or Moses had, we have access to the same Holy Spirit through Christ.
- E. 4:11-14 teaches us that godly heroism does not only depend on courage or personal prowess. It ultimately depends on God’s being with us.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the purpose of 4:14? (2) How do the Israelites respond to Joshua after the river crossing? (3) What is the most important ingredient of godly heroism? (4) Can we know the Presence of God with us today?

VI. A Time to Be Heroes

Just as the Nation of God was called to show forth God-centered heroism in Joshua's day, so it is called to do the same today. What we have in Joshua 4:11-14 is really a glimpse, a vision even, of what godly heroism is like. God intends for us to take this vision and live it out; replay it in everyday life. He calls his children today to demonstrate heroic loyalty to him, courage, and resolve against the darkness that has solidified itself within our society. And he has given us his Spirit of adoption and courage to help us in our work.

- A. Why do we need heroes?
—Without heroes, civilization will sink into moral mediocrity.
- B. But why will civilization sink into moral mediocrity?
 - 1. Because the Fall has bent all human life away from that which is good to that which is evil.
 - 2. Because there are real Powers working to bend humanity toward evil (Eph 6:12).
- C. God wants to give heroes to the world—his own children.
 - 1. We are to be the light of the world (Mt 5:14-16).
 - 2. The creation awaits the revealing of the sons of God (Rom 8:19).
- D. What form does godly heroism take today?
 - 1. Godly heroism is loyalty to God and his Messiah (Josh 1:16-17).
 - 2. Godly heroism is courage in the face of danger.
 - 3. Godly heroism is resolve against evil (Eph 6:12).
- E. Godly heroism is born out of God's Presence with us.
 - 1. The Lord YHWH is the Hero of heroes (Ex 15:1-3)—and therefore the Father of heroes.
 - 2. Only God can produce heroism in his children.
 - 3. To make us his heroes to the world, God has given us...
 - a. his Spirit of power and love and self-control—not fear (2 Tim 1:7).
 - b. his Spirit of adoption (Rom 8:15).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Why will civilization sink into moral mediocrity? (2) How does godly heroism look like in our lives? What are its elements? (3) What has God done to enable us to be his heroes to the world?

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