

February 24 –

“Are You Ready?”

Scripture:

“Joshua said, “Prepare . . . to cross the Jordan River to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.” Joshua 1:11

The promise - the dream of the land - had sustained God’s wandering, nomadic people through countless trials and heartaches. “We are going to the Promised Land.” It is a phrase of faith so dominant that we now use the phrase metaphorically for our future hope, eternal life. The promise supplied determination and a will to persevere. But, the promise is more than land, geography, dirt. God invites us to prepare for a journey which crosses to more than a geographic destination; we cross to a whole new dimension of reality. Are you ready to embrace the full dimension of life which God promises?

The Boy Scout motto is, “Be prepared.”

I thought I was fully prepared for the shared life of marriage with Denise. The truth is, I was clueless. When my beauty came down the center aisle, I could hardly breathe. I was ecstatic. My simplistic view did not fully understand the wonder of a lifetime shared in love. It is not all easy. It is not all roses. There is pain and struggle and disappointment and bewilderment. And there is love. It is beautiful.

Jesus said simply, “I came that you might have life, life to the full.” [John 10].

One can never fully prepare for every contingency which might await us. But we can trust the promise of One who is present with us always. We never journey alone. We do not fully comprehend all that God has for us, nor all that God desires us to do in His name. But, our hearts come to the place where we say, “Because you go with me, I am willing. I am ready.”

Prayer:

“Lord, I am ready – ready to acknowledge my weaknesses, ready to face my fears, ready to leave the rhythms of my familiar life behind. God, bring me into a new dimension of life with you. Show me the way. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

February 25 –

“Wait”

Scripture:

“Wait for the LORD; be strong, let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the LORD.”

--Psalm 27:14

Wait is a four letter word.

I have never been fond of waiting, even if I am in a boat staring at sun kissed waves waiting for a fish to bite. Do you ever have a tough time waiting?

I do not like waiting for a green light, waiting for a doctor’s appointment, waiting for a bus, a train, a plane. I do not like waiting for springtime.

Why can’t I find the beauty, the wonder, the glory in the present moment? Why do I always think I’ll be happier when _____? Fill in the blank for yourself.

God makes promises in His Word, and He is perfectly faithful. Sometimes we are impatient as we wait for fulfillment. What about God’s people waiting for Him to deliver on His Word? Through the years, God made promises which stirred faith, courage and hope, even as they endured challenging periods of oppression and suffering, bondage and defeat.

Through years, decades, even centuries, God’s people waited and hoped. I pray for a week and become frustrated with God. The scriptures describe whole generations who lived and died with nothing but hope in God’s Word to sustain them. Yet, for many, in their lifetimes, the promise was never fulfilled. Still, God was, is, and always will be faithful to His Word.

Joshua witnessed a whole generation pass away in the period of wilderness wanderings. But God is clear in His message and call to Joshua. The waiting is over. Now is the time to cross the river and receive all that God had promised.

Jesus said, “The one who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life . . . and has already passed out of death into life.” [John 5:24]. Already. Present tense continuous.

We receive the promise of eternity now, immediately. Eternal life does not begin, as we sometimes think, at the moment of physical death. Rather, eternity is God’s gift now, the moment we believe.

Bible scholars of John’s Gospel call this the Eternal Now. By the presence of the crucified and resurrected Jesus within the believer, we are already forgiven, already eternally alive, and of course, already eternally loved by the Lord of life.

No waiting for love or life. They are God’s gifts for us today.

Prayer:

“Lord God, fill me with faith to believe that your promises are for me. I rejoice that I am already eternally alive. Nothing in life, death, or the future can separate me from your love or change your promise. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

February 26 –

“Who Leads?”

Scripture:

“I will be with you. I will never leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I promised to their ancestors to give them.” [Joshua 1:5-6]

Joshua came back from scouting out the Promised Land, and together with Caleb, said that the Lord would give the land to God’s people as God had promised. Yet, Joshua knew that the land was filled with giants. How do you face giants in your life?

A giant might be any person, context, or circumstance which is too big and too powerful for you to face alone and in your own strength. A giant might also be a challenging assignment which God calls you to do for Him. What are your giants? How does one draw strength and courage to face difficult challenges?

I believe that strength and courage flow into us with the knowledge that God will never leave us or forsake us. God is not only present, but He supports us and approves of us doing His mission. God promised Joshua and commanded him to “be strong!” God also promises us that He is always with us and will be in us.

Jesus said, “I will ask my Father to send you a Comforter” [John 14]. He was speaking of sending the Holy Spirit. The Greek word is “paraclatos.” It means, “one who is called alongside to help.” Other translations include, “Counselor,” “Guide,” or “Advocate.” Jesus said that His Spirit is continually with us and within us. “He will lead you into all truth,” Jesus said. Again, Jesus said, “He will help you remember all that I have said.” Just as God encouraged Joshua, Jesus wants us to know that we are never flying solo, we are never alone.

Perhaps you have seen the email circulating about the word “guidance.” It signifies – “God, you and I dance.” The trouble is I always want to lead. I make my plans and then as an afterthought, ask God to bless what I have determined. Hopefully, I can learn to begin by asking for God’s guidance, begin by asking, “Lord, what is your will?”

I cannot face the challenges of life alone. Nor do I want to. Jesus said, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” [Matthew 28:20]. His presence is my courage and strength.

Prayer:

“Forgive me, Lord, when I make all my plans without consulting you. Teach me to begin by seeking your guidance. Day by day, encourage me in the vivid awareness that you will never leave me and that your Spirit dwells within me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

February 27 –

“Lifted Up”

Scripture:

“The LORD said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.” [Joshua 3:7].

For the first time, God exalts Joshua. God “lifts him up” to remove all doubt. He is going to exalt him by using Joshua to be His instrument in a supernatural miracle – the dividing of the Jordan River so that God’s people can cross over.

No more second fiddle. No questions about who is in charge. God will remove all doubt. Joshua is the leader. The anointing of God’s Spirit is on him, just as it was with Moses. God’s power is working through him.

Joshua did not seek this role. He did not run for office. He did not lobby for the people’s consensus. Rather, through his life, he was faithful. God chose him not only because of his gifts and abilities, but also because of his heart and his character. Loyalty and faithfulness are valued qualities in any life. God, who sees the heart, exalted Joshua. God lifted him up.

Jesus is also loyal and faithful. Jesus humbled Himself, emptied himself of glory, and became a servant to all. So the scripture says, “God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” [Philippians 2].

Whenever we do things for self-promotion, recognition, or people’s gratitude, we will always feel as if we were not adequately acknowledged. If our motive in “doing good” is to treat people as “stepping stones,” as a “means to an end,” it diminishes our action.

“Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Love, serve, and give as if you were doing it for the Lord Himself. Even if no one notices or no one knows, God knows. Let that be enough.

“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another . . .Humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand, that *he may lift you up* in due time.” [1 Peter 5:5-6]. Jesus has lifted us from being prisoners to being children of God. This motivated the Apostle Paul to say, “My eager expectation and hope is that Christ will be exalted [lifted up] in my body . . . For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” [Philippians 1:20-21].

Prayer:

“Lord, thank you for lifting me up in your strength and love, and asking me to serve you. By your Spirit, shine through my heart, so that I may always lift You up. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

February 28 –

“Stepping into the Flow”

“As soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD – the LORD of all the earth – set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up.”

Joshua 3:13 [read Joshua 3: 7-13]

The people of Israel did not stand by the river and wait for the waters to part and then cross on dry ground. They were instructed that as soon as the “priests . . . set foot in the Jordan” the miracle would happen. Faith steps into action. On the basis of God’s promise, faith steps out, or should we say faith steps into the flow? As the believer moves into action, God’s power is released.

The Jordan River is at flood stage during the harvest. The river’s current would be at its peak, at the high-water mark. The volume would be full force; the speed of the current swift. Stepping out in faith is scary. Often it feels very risky to trust God. Today, someone quoted Bible study writer Beth Moore, who said recently, “We believe in God, but we don’t believe God.” It’s often true, isn’t it?

What matters is not the size of our faith, but the One in whom our faith trusts. The point is never – “How strong is my faith?” The point is always – “What is God’s capacity?” The answer is, “Infinite!” How much love does He have for us? Infinite. How much power flows to us, working for us? Infinite. No limits with God.

I love the passage in Psalm 46, “There is a river whose streams make glad the people of God; God flows in the midst of her, she will not be moved.” The flow of the Spirit is a constant current of love and life coming to where we are. Faith is aware of it and rejoices in it. Do you perceive the Spirit’s power flowing for you?

As faith steps out, we place ourselves in the flow of the Spirit’s power. Though nothing has visibly changed, we move forward expecting God to help, act, and bless. This is not a “genie in the bottle” notion, rather faith which expects God to bless because God loves.

We are God’s people. The Spirit forever flows to us, in us, and through us. And, we are marked us with the cross. Like an invisible tattoo, we are marked as people of distinction, united in purpose and mission with Jesus to love the world as God does.

So step into the flow of life to serve a greater good. Shine with hope in a dark, cynical world. Walking in faith, we cross out of the wilderness into the place of God’s promise.

Prayer –

“Lord God, give us the courage to live out our faith in daily life, to live trusting the promises You make. Help us to live expecting You to bless. Help us to serve others expecting your power to flow. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

March 1 –

Come and Listen

Scripture

“Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come closer and listen to the words of the LORD your God. You will know that the Living God is with you.” Joshua 3:9-10

It sounds like an invitation to hear intimate secrets, to learn important truths which will be essential to life. “Come closer and listen.” Like young Samuel we would do well to respond, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

All too often, in my prayer life I do all the talking. I catch myself babbling in the Presence of my Father. Not that God minds. God is always delighted when His children come into His presence to share their hearts. But, when I do all the talking, babbling until I run out of things to say, I miss important truths which God’s Spirit might wish to communicate to me. “Come closer and *listen*.”

What does the Word say?

“Know that the living God is among you.” Living God. God is not dead, dusty or irrelevant. God is not impotent, nor indifferent. God cares about the details of your life. He weeps with you and rejoices with you. In every way, God resonates with your life experiences. God is actively engaged in our daily lives overseeing the fulfillment of His Word, unwrapping every promise as a gift. Our living God is as close as the air that we breathe.

God is also “Sovereign.” This is an archaic term little used in our present political age. What does it mean? God is the ruler of all the earth. He is greater in power than all other rulers, nations, government officials, Wall Street tycoons. God is also greater than all the forces of darkness. God reigns above all others. So many elements of life seem or feel out of control. Yet, in faith we can know that God is still on the throne. “God’s will” will be done! History will end on God’s terms. In fact, God is the “prime mover” unfolding history as He designs.

As God miraculously parts the waters and the people cross on dry land, God is repeating the miracle which marked their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. They began a journey in the wilderness, following the presence of Yahweh in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. God was faithful to every promise then, and God still is faithful to every promise today.

“No matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Jesus Christ.” [2 Corinthians 1:20]. The miraculous, unexpected, glorious gift of Jesus’ life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead gives to each of us the assurance that God will use supernatural power to see us through this life.

Someone once said to me, “Pay attention to what the Spirit whispers to you when you are suffering or in pain.” Even when we are in some “wilderness experience” of life, God says, “Come closer and listen.” Tenderly, intimately God wants you to hear His voice express love, comfort and promise. And when God promises, God will be faithful.

Prayer –

“Lord, tune my heart to hear your voice. Teach me to listen. Thank you that you are alive and actively involved in my life. Thank you that you rule over all. Come, rule in my heart. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

March 2 –

God Provides

Scripture

“Now the Jordan River is at flood stage during the harvest.” Joshua 3:15

The wilderness wanderings ended at the perfect time – harvest time. Flood stage waters made the crossing a great miracle of deliverance, but also, harvest time made the entrance into a new land a wonderful provision for the people. It was in fact a “land flowing with milk and honey.” God was bringing them into the land at the peak of abundance for their provision.

For forty years each morning God faithfully provided food for the people with manna on the ground. The people gathered this “daily bread” and were sustained by the gift of God. They were vividly aware of their dependence on God for survival. Entrance into this new land of promise changed the dynamic of how to survive. The nature of God’s provision changed. The land itself would now sustain them.

The Psalmist wrote, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” God’s people are leaving the “rhythms of the known” [though the barren wilderness was a difficult place] for the abundant promise of the unknown. Each time we embark on an adventure of faith into unknown territory, we must trust God to provide what we need.

As Jesus was dying on the cross He said, “Into Thy hands I commit my life.” Sacrificially, He entrusted Himself fully to God. Sometimes our pragmatic fears hold us back from moving forward in faith and trusting God for our future. We can place our lives into God’s hands. There is no better place to rest. Paul said it beautifully, “God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 4:19]. Wherever the adventure of faith takes us, we can trust that God will provide for us.

Prayer

“Lord God, your blessings are given to us day after day. Open our eyes to see your provision. Increase our faith to trust you fully with grateful hearts. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”