

WHAT'S GOD UP TO Joshua 1:1-2

Occasionally I will look at Vicki with one of those ornery half smiles and immediately I will get a response ... “What are you up to?” In fact ... sometimes I do that just to make her try to figure out what I am up to ... even if I am not up to anything. It is just one of those fun things to do! Vicki might not think so ... but I do.

You ever wonder what God is up to? God ... what's next? What do you have in mind? Where are we going from here ... as individuals ... as families ... as the church. What does the future hold?

We are starting a new sermon series this morning titled “**Facing the Future.**” It is a study from the book of Joshua. Towards the end of the book of **DEUTERONOMY** ... Moses has led the Israelites to the edge of the Promised Land ... They are about to enter but Moses does not get to go in with them. He gathers all the Israelites together and tells them that he is about to die but Joshua will be the one to lead them in.

And then he calls Joshua to him in front of all the Jews and here is what he says in **DEUTERONOMY 31:7-8 ...** ⁷ Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. ⁸ The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

And Moses passes the baton. Joshua will now lead the people. I wonder what those people thought?

- Will Joshua lead the same way that Moses did?
- Will he change everything that Moses started?
- Will we be treated the same way by Joshua as we were by Moses?

I am sure that all kinds of questions went through their minds ... but they had to face the facts ... there was a change coming!

Years ago ... before my Grandma Harless died ... I sit down with her and asked her what were the neatest changes she remembered coming into existence during her lifetime. Now keep in mind ... she was born about the start of the 20th Century. She listed several changes that had happened.

- They went from horse and buggy to cars
- They went from radios to color TV's
- They went from open windows to air conditioning
- They went from candles and kerosene lamps to light bulbs
- They went from the privy out back to indoor plumbing

But she said that the neatest thing that she remembered was when they invented the automatic door opener. She said she had gone to the grocery with her daughter-in-law up in Michigan and when she paid for her groceries and started toward the door ... it opened on its own. She had never seen that before and could not figure out how that door opened.

Change is inevitable. It happens whether we like it or not. And the fact is ... most of us do not like change! We want things to stay the same ... it is more comfortable that way. But that is not the way life works. Change happens!

So, this morning we want to ask the question ... How do we deal with those changes? How do we get to the point that we can ... not just accept change ... but embrace it?

Turn with me to **JOSHUA 1:1-2** ... which is our passage for this morning. Here is what it says ... **After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: ²"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.**

There are only 52 words in these 2 verses ... and yet those 52 words changes everything. Maybe you have had just a few words that have changed everything in your life

- You are fired
- You are pregnant
- You have cancer
- I don't love you anymore

Just in the short time that it took someone to say those words ... your whole life changed! What does the book of Joshua tell us that can help us deal with change?

Let me share with you 3 actions to thrive in the midst of change ...

1 ... ANTICIPATE CHANGE

We are creatures of habit ... aren't we? How many of you when you come into the worship center head to the same seat every Sunday? I can pretty well know who is here and who is not by looking at your favorite seats.

- Howes sit right here
- Hargraves sit back there
- Steve and Liz sits right there
- Don and Karen sit right over here

We gravitate toward the same place ... we don't really like change.

The first Sunday that Joyce and Mindy came to church they found a seat toward the front about 3 rows back. When I went over to welcome them ... the first question out of their mouths was "Are we sitting in someone's seat?"

For some of us ... if someone is sitting in our seats here ... we go into a tail-spin. What are we going to do? Where are we going to sit? Who do they think they are sitting in our seats?

Change happens and we need to anticipate the fact that it is coming!

VERSE 1 of our passage tells us of a big change for the Israelites ... Listen to it again ... **After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD.**

Moses was gone! The man that the Israelites had followed through the wilderness for 40 years. They should have known it was coming. People do die you know.

And if they had been "reading their Bibles" ... they would have known this change was coming ... **DEUTERONOMY 32:51b-52 ... because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. ⁵² Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."**

Now what? What will they do without Moses? He was the one that talked to God on their behalf. He was the one that answered their every complaint. How can they possibly go on? No one could possibly take Moses' place.

I want to tell you a secret. As great as Moses might have been ... He was not the one who led the Israelites through the wilderness. God was!

Listen to **EXODUS 13:21-22** ... ²¹ By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. ²² Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Let's get real personal for a minute. There is change coming here at Tri. It is no secret ... by any means ... that I am retiring at the end of this year. My last sermon here will be on Christmas Eve. I am on my way out and will be passing the baton on to someone else.

Now mind you ... I am no Moses ... and certainly could not be compared to him. AND ... I certainly hope I don't go out the same way that Moses did. BUT ... the baton is going to be passed on. There will be a Joshua to follow. And here is the point that I want to make. I am not the one in control ... you are not the one in control ... and the man who takes my place is not in control ... GOD IS! And I am convinced beyond any doubt ... God has big plans for Tri.

Change is coming ... anticipate it.

2 ... PREPARE FOR CHANGE

That brings us to the second point I want to make this morning. We need to prepare for change ... whether it is in our own personal lives ... or the life of this church.

Look at the next part of **VERSE 2** in today's passage ... **Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River.**

Now mind you ... there was no bridge over the Jordan River for these 1.5 to 2 million people to cross. SO ... how do they prepare for this major change in their lives? They are moving from walking the wilderness to their final destination ... Home ... the Land flowing with Milk and Honey. BUT how do they get there?

The change was filled with barriers and unknowns ... the change was scaring!
How do we move from where we are now to where we are about to go?

Great question ... right? How do we prepare for the change?

Remember what happened at the Red Sea? The Israelites had just left Egypt ... they had just begun their journey to the Promised Land. They came to the Red Sea and there were no bridges. To make it worse ... the Egyptian armies were coming after them. They were certainly in a panic. And what does God do? He splits the Red Sea and they walk across on dry land.

By looking to the past ... these Israelites would remember that God provided in their time of need. And if God can split the Red Sea ... the Jordan River would be a piece of cake. By the way ... that is exactly what he did.

1 ... One of the ways to prepare for change in the future is to see how God has delivered in the past.

If you are going through some changes in your life ... and you are scared. The changes seem insurmountable ... Remember the times that God delivered for you! He has not left you to move forward on your own. He is right there with you. And he will see you through whatever you face.

2 ... A second way to prepare for change is to listen for God's voice of direction.

We just read part of **VERSE 2 ... Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River.** Who said that? Look up at **VERSE 1** again ... **After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun.** God is the One talking to Joshua. He is the one telling him to make the change. But how did Joshua know it was God talking? Because he had spent plenty of time praying ... he knew his voice.

When you talk to God a lot ... you learn what his voice sounds like. And so when God is ready to make a change in your life ... and he speaks ... you know he is in control of what is about to happen.

The Israelites who are standing on the banks of the Jordan River in today's passage are the children of those who started out from Egypt. The parents are all dead ... except for Joshua and Caleb. You want to know why they did not enter the Promised Land? Because they refused to listen to the voice of God. They thought

the barriers and the unknowns were insurmountable. And they ended up missing out on what God had waiting for them.

Prepare for change. Look back into the past and see how God has delivered time and time again in your lives. Spend time listening to the voice of God so that when he is ready to make a move in your life ... you will know it is him leading you on.

3 ... EMBRACE THE CHANGE

We may not like change ... but when God is the one leading that change ... it always turns out for the good!

Listen to a favorite verse of mine ... **ROMANS 8:28** ... And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Friends ... God is not going to lead you into change that will not make you a better person for it. God knows what he is doing! And we need to trust him. Does that mean that going through that change will not include some tough times? Of course not! Growth comes through tough times. But no matter how tough the times might be that you go through ... God is right there leading the way!

Look at the last part of **VERSE 2** ... into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.

These people were in for a big change ...

- They were changing from being homeless to having a permanent home
- They were changing from eating manna every day to eating the fruits of the Land of Milk and Honey
- They were changing from being a nation on the run to a nation settled in.

Was it an easy change? No. But it was a great change.

CONCLUSION

Change is scary! We are not real fans of change are we. But when we know that God is in control and the change he has in mind for us is going to work for the good ... it makes it all worthwhile!

Tri is in the midst of making a change. Moses is passing on (hopefully not passing away) and Joshua is taking over. We don't know who that Joshua is yet ... but we know it is in God's hands and it is going to be good!

But the church is not the only one that faces change. I am sure many of you are facing changes in your life as well ...

- Children are graduating and moving on
- Marriages are happening
- Job changes are on the horizon
- All kinds of changes are taking place

I don't know what changes God is doing in your personal lives right ... But I do know this ... He is there leading you through it! He has great plans for you ... and if you will listen to him and follow him ... you will reap the fruit of that change that will be beyond your wildest dreams.

- Expect Change
- Prepare for Change
- Embrace Change

Remember ... God is not a stagnant God ... He is on the move. And when God is not the move ... Change happens!