

Text: Joshua 1:9

Theme: For I Am with You

July 29, 2018

How powerful is a word of encouragement? If you could give it a monetary value, what would someone's presence or their words of encouragement be worth in your most difficult moments? As Joshua prepared to take the leadership role placed upon him at the death of Moses, Joshua needed to know that somehow, some way, he could accomplish his task. Thousands of years later, we still need those same words of encouragement, that same assurance of God's presence.

I. God's never-changing promise is, "I am with you wherever." A. Yet, we have a problem. 1. We forget. As great a leader as Moses was, Moses forgot. As Moses created one excuse after another, Moses forgot who was speaking to him. And, as Joshua prepared for his new role, he, too, forgot God would be with him. We may not be Moses or Joshua. Yet we face the same problem everyone before us has faced. We forget the presence of God when we need that assurance most. In our most challenging moments, we may think we are tough, but, in actuality, we're ten pound weaklings because we forget the God of all power who stands beside us.

2. Another problem we face is that we get discouraged. Joshua was discouraged before he even began his new role. Our proof is found in God's words, "Do not be discouraged." If discouragement wasn't likely, wasn't a reality, a very real part of Joshua's life at that moment, would God have said, "Do not be discouraged?" We don't need a reminder because we already know that discouragement and us, well, we're good friends. You can deny it, act like it never occurs, or try to convince yourself or someone else that it doesn't happen, but it will never work. You get discouraged; I get discouraged. We're all in the same boat and our boat is sinking.

3. We also become afraid. Put yourself in Joshua's shoes. Moses, God's greatest leader ever, has just died, and suddenly God says, "Jim, Mary. You're in charge. You are going to lead My stubborn, obstinate, unbending people." Now, do you see why God said, "Do not be terrified?" Joshua knew what he was up against and he was terrified. How many times in the past year have you been afraid that God wouldn't show up, that God wouldn't step in when you needed Him most? We'd like to deny it, to push that truth under the rug so no one else notices, but no matter how much we try, we're like Joshua, afraid and in need of God's encouragement.

B. So, what directives do we receive because God is always with us? 1. Because He is with us, He says, "Be strong." At first glance, that sounds like a useless statement, doesn't it? "Joshua, be strong. There. Now everything will be fine." But God's statement carries far more power than that. In our Epistle, we see that power defined more carefully, "That He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit." Now, "Be strong" takes on new meaning as we realize this is a Spirit-empowered statement. In essence, God says to you and to me, "Use the power that I have placed in your heart. Be as strong as the strength I give you!"

2. Because God is with us, He says, "Be courageous." Paul added these words, "That you may be filled with all the fullness of God." If we are filled with the fullness of God, aren't we filled with boldness, with courage? As God says, "Be courageous," He's once again commanding us to be who we are and what we are. He's not saying, "Find some courage" or "muster up some boldness." Instead, He's saying, "Because I am with you, I have filled you with boldness and courage. Use the courage, the

boldness that I've given you. Depend on Me and you will discover courage you never realized, boldness you didn't know you possessed because I am God and I am with you!"

3. Because God is with us, He says, "Be filled with faith." Was Joshua a man of enormous faith, a pillar of faith? Was this Joshua's doing or God at work? Look at our Epistle, "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Faith isn't about us; it's all about God in us. Because we stake our lives on the fact that God is with us, we carry a faith that has the power to move mountains. You have that faith. I have that faith. God is waiting. He's waiting for you and me, for each one of us to use that faith, to put that faith into action. As He says, "Be filled with faith," He is saying to each one of us, "You possess it; now use it for I am with you!"

4. Because God is with us, He says, "Take heart." In our Gospel, the disciples are out on rough waters in the middle of the night struggling to get to the shoreline. As Jesus comes to them walking on the water, what does He say? Of all the words Jesus could have spoken, Jesus says, "Take heart. It is I." Can you imagine how glorious those words must have been? Can you imagine how encouraged Joshua would have been when God said, "Take heart?" In our most discouraging moments, we need to open the ears of our hearts and hear God say to us, "Take heart," because as He speaks those words, we will realize the power of those two words.

5. Because God is with us, He says, "Go." How many times did God say to His chosen leaders, "Now, go?" Those are empowering words, words that say, "Because I am with you, because I have prepared you, because I have set you in this place for such a time as this, because I've given you everything you need, you are prepared, you are ready. The next move is to go!" Too often, our weariness leads to inactivity, to sitting on the side of the track. Since God is with you, He says, "Get on your feet. Step onto the track. I don't care what things look like ahead. Step into those starting blocks and run the race marked out for you because I am with you!"

6. Because God is with us, He says, "Stand before God in amazement." "And when He got into the boat with them, the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded." When we live each day convinced God is with us, our response to each day will be one of amazement. The people of Israel were amazed at the leadership of Joshua. Joshua was amazed at how God used him. And, you and I, we have every reason to be amazed at the power of God, the activity of God, and at how God chooses to use us to touch hearts and change lives. Every moment that we realize God is with us is a moment of amazement, pure amazement because we realize that it's all about God and not about us, pure amazement because we also realize that it can be no other way. Amen.