

Reading Schedule for November 21-27, 2016

This is the week of Thanksgiving and one of the greatest events in the Bible is God's people claiming the Promised Land. God's instruction to Joshua is relevant to us today, as well as his power to use the most unusual methods to bring victory. I wanted us to be reminded of God's desire to bless us, and our need to trust him. Previously, the Israelites had been too afraid to believe that God could actually give them the Promised Land. Fear (being afraid) is never the right response. Let's study what this story has to tell us and apply it to our lives. I believe it will be a marvelous Thanksgiving week.

November 21 – Joshua 1:10-18: “Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses.” (v.17) I am impressed with the Israelites because they are going to follow Joshua like they followed Moses. These are big shoes to fill. The Lord had been preparing Joshua for some time, and he was ready in mind and heart; and so was the faith of God's people. This is an encouraging interaction between Joshua and the leaders of his people. When God commissions Joshua, he tells him to be strong and courageous three different times. He took God's message to heart, and found the strength and courage he needed from God to lead the people. His example is a great example to us. God says the same things to you. He wants to make you strong and courageous. Are you willing? Will you trust him? This is crucial for the next step that God wants to take you. Without this, you may not step out. Will you take the next step? Are you ready? Why or why not?

November 22 – Joshua 2:1-24: “But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, ‘Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from.’” (v.4) You understand some of the history about Rahab. The story will end well for her, as she and her family will be rescued as the Israelites defeat Jericho. But not only that, Rahab is a part the genealogy of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 1:5 we read about Rahab being the mother of Boaz. She had no idea what would happen to her, or if the risks she is taking would even pay off. The Lord was pleased that she knew that God was great and mighty. She had heard the report and believed. The Lord would honor her faith and rescue her life, as well as her family. God loves using the unlikely people and situations to show himself. Remember he uses jars of clay! What do you notice in this story? What does Rahab teach us?

November 23 – Joshua 3:1-17: “Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.’” (v.5) I have studied the meaning of consecration. Consecration was often done by making a sacrifice – displaying your trust in the fact that God will work on your behalf. Consecration highlights the importance of approaching God with a pure heart. This means repentance followed by forgiveness. The Israelites had not trusted the Lord before, but this time they would trust him. Their hearts were prepared to honor God and courageously step forward. I have asked Christian couples who are living together before marriage to consecrate themselves. I have asked them to repent, receive God's forgiveness, and acknowledge that they had disobeyed God. As the evidence of their repentance, they would take steps to be married and separate themselves from any intimacy reserved for marriage. How can couples expect God to bless them when they dishonor his teaching? I am hopeful for couples who consecrate themselves and commit themselves to marriage in a way that honors God. How do you understand consecration for your life?

Happy Thanksgiving! November 24 – Joshua 4:1-24: “Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.” (v.9) God directed them to build a memorial from twelve stones drawn from the river by twelve men, one from each tribe. This may seem like an insignificant step in their mission of conquering the land, but God did not want his people to forget the significance of what he did on their behalf. Too often we race through life, and have very few memorials that remind us of God's power on our behalf. I appreciate this symbolic act, and I encourage you to reflect back on how God has been good to you. What might be an appropriate memorial for you to remember? What do you notice that inspires you from this chapter? What memorials are you thankful for today?

November 25 – 2 Corinthians 6:1-13: As we continue through 2 Corinthians, this will be another reminder that the pathway to growth and spiritual maturity is a hard one with challenges along the way. The Apostle Paul said that he did not receive God's grace in vain. Through every challenge he stayed steadfast to the message and persevered for the Gospel. His example will help us as we face the numerous challenges that disrupt our journey. What might the preacher emphasize this coming Sunday? What stands out to you?

November 26 – Joshua 5:1-12: “At that time the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.’ So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth.” (vv. 2 & 3) The rite of circumcision marked Israel's relationship and status with God as his covenant people. In the New Testament baptism is similar. It is an outward symbol of an inward relationship. When God made the original covenant with Abraham, he required each male be circumcised as a sign of cutting off the old life, and beginning a new life with God. Other cultures had used circumcision as a sign of entry into adulthood, but Israel used it as a sign of following God. Other religions have used baptism as a sign of repentance because of sin, but in the New Testament baptism was a sign of new life and salvation. Our God wants to lift us up, not push us down. There is affirmation of his love for you and me. Our God is good. Does that make sense? How do you respond to this reading today?

November 27 – Joshua 5:13 – 6:14: “‘Neither,’ he replied, ‘but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’ Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, ‘What message does my Lord have for his servant?’” (v.5:14) This is a special encounter with the living God. This angel was a commander of the Lord's army. As a sign of worship, Joshua took off his sandals. Joshua needed the affirmation of God and the assurance that God was on his side. This reminded Joshua of his dependence on God, as well as strengthening his confidence, as they were to approach Jericho and defeat the city. Absolute honor and worship of God is crucial to experiencing God's power and authority. The Lord deserves our deepest devotion and our complete submission. He is the one in authority. Joshua is reminded of that and responds with complete surrender. Does that make sense? How do you respond to our great God?

Prayers: Pray for your pursuit of the Lord as we enjoy Thanksgiving and ready ourselves for God's gift to the world, his one and only Son. May this be a marvelous Christmas Season for each of us.