

June 14, 2020 - David Baumgartner

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Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Great reminders, just the simplicity of the gospel that we can trust in Jesus Christ.

Amen. How refreshing that is. So good morning to everybody. I see some faces I haven't seen in a while. And so some new ones.

It's really good to see you today. We're coming to the end of the book of Joshua. So, in fact, chapters 22 to 24, they're called the farewell section.

Joshua is an old man by this time. All the battles are over. And the land is being apportioned to these various tribes. But as we're going to see, there's some loose ends that need to be dealt with. So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Joshua chapter 1. Yeah, I pulled one on you there. Chapter 1. There was an incident that took place while Israel was under Moses' command.

[1:08] And it's actually recorded in Numbers 32. But I'm just going to paraphrase for you if I can. The 12 tribes of Israel are heading west toward the promised land under Moses.

And they're getting close to the Jordan River, which is actually a boundary line to the promised land.

And some of the Israelites said to Moses, Hey, this area that we're in right now is really nice.

It's great for cattle. It's a great place to raise a family. Moses, you guys go on ahead of us. And we're just going to stay right here. Best wishes and thanks for everything.

That's what they said. First of all, who were these Israelites? Israelites? Well, it's not just a few people. No, it's the Jewish tribes of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh. And based on a census that was taken in Numbers 26, we're talking about over 100,000 men.

That's a lot of people. Well, how did Moses react?

[2:18] Well, I'll tell you what, he got really mad. He did. And can you blame him? I mean, almost 20% of your military force has come to you and said, Hey, we're done.

We're staying here. We're done. So in verses 6 to 15, Moses launches into this speech. And so he says, You guys are just like your fathers.

Those who went to spy out the land 40 years ago. And they came back with this fearful report. And it discouraged everybody. And it made God angry.

And none of them were allowed to enter the promised land except for Caleb and for Joshua. And now here you guys are doing the very same thing. Well, these three tribes, I wouldn't say that they were afraid.

Because look at what they said. They said to Moses, Let's make a deal. We're going to make a deal. Our families and belongings can stay here.

[3:22] And all of our armed men will go on with you into the promised land. And we'll fight the battles. And when all of the enemies have been conquered, we'll come back to this place.

Yeah. Well, Moses agreed. And so the 12 tribes, all together, they forged ahead. All except for the women, children, and the cattle of these three tribes.

They stayed behind on the east side of the Jordan River. In Deuteronomy 34, 5, we read that Moses, with whom the deal was made, he dies.

Uh-oh. But now what's going to happen? So Joshua is wondering, Is this deal still on? So look with me in chapter 1 of the book of Joshua.

We see in verses 12 to 18, yes, the deal is still on. Focus on verse 16 with me. It says, And they answered Joshua, saying, All that you have commanded us, we will do.

[4:25] Wherever you send us, we will go. And just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses.

So in chapter 4 of Joshua, we see that the Israelites crossed the Jordan River. And then we read about all these battles and all these victories that took place.

Did you know that during our study of Joshua, we may not have emphasized this, but did you know that all of the tribes of Israel had their families with them while they're engaged in these battles? All except for these three tribes? Yeah. They were valiant warriors dressed in battle array. And they were totally devoted to fighting.

How would you like to have a group of guys like that with you? And they probably led a lot of the battles that we saw here in Joshua. Now, if you would, please turn to Joshua chapter 22.

[5:28] Because we're going to pick it up here. All the battles are over at this point in our text. And Joshua comes to these three groups again.

And we can call them the Transjordan tribes or the Eastern tribes of Israel. What will Joshua say to them at this point?

Well, let's go ahead and read the first nine verses of chapter 22. Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, You have kept all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you.

And you have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. You have not forsaken your brothers in these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God.

And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brothers as he spoke to them. Therefore, turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you beyond the Jordan.

[6:35] Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, to hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart, with all your soul.

So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. Now, to the one half tribe of Manasseh, Moses had given a possession in Bashan.

But to the other half, Joshua gave a possession among their brothers, westward beyond the Jordan. So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them. And he said to them, Return to your tents with great riches, and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and with very many clothes.

Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers. And the sons of Reuben, and the sons of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh returned home, and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had possessed according to the command of the Lord through Moses.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for these words today. We know that they are historically true, and that we can count on your word, Lord, to be true.

[8:08] Lord, we know that you've given us these words, not just as a history lesson, but that therein we can see Jesus, and we can see, Lord, all that you have for us today.

We thank you for each person here. We ask that we would walk in your ways, Lord, and glean from this what you'd have us glean. Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, here we are. We're at this time of year, and what happens at this time of year? A lot of things. Commencement speeches.

Yeah. Have you ever been to one? Yeah, I'm sure most of you have. If you look on the Internet, you'll see that President Obama has given many. I think he gives, I saw something like 25 a year. But not only President Obama. Michelle, Beyonce has given them. Lady Gaga has given some commencement speeches. Meghan Markle.

[9:08] I wonder what she would have to say. President Trump just gave one yesterday. Where did he give it? Yeah, that's right. West Point. Would have liked to have heard that one. Right before summer of each year, there's this graduation.

And so this was kind of a strange year, of course, because of COVID-19. A lot of people did them over Zoom. And I don't know if that was better or worse.

But it still happened. It really marks a time of transition from one place to another. And so, you know, it's basically saying you've been successful in all, and you've done all that was required.

And now it's time to move on. Now to have the real deal that comes. I looked at me, what is a definition? Or what's the purpose of a commencement ceremony?

All it said was three things. To recognize people for their hard work. To reinforce that the steps that they've taken have been worthwhile. And then to basically say, we hope everything goes well with you.

[10:16] When you think about that definition, don't you think that's kind of what we just read? Very similar. And I'll tell you what, if that's what the purpose of today's commencement speech is, I would say, yeah, if those are the purposes, many of those speeches fulfill that.

But I'll tell you what, if a commencement speech is intended to be helpful, perhaps in terms of what life is really about, then I'm going to say that it doesn't help.

Unless it's about Jesus Christ. And it's about the fact that we are at war with God. In our natural state.

We are at war with God. And so any speech that doesn't deal with the real problems, it's going to fall short. That's what I'm going to say. Now, of course, these speeches, they're not intending to be a theological discourse.

Certainly not from many of the people I've mentioned. But I'll tell you what, what's the message of the church today? What should that be? In our text, Joshua's speech does much of this.

[11:29] In fact, look with me, verse 1. It says that he summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Well, I can tell you right there, we don't have those guys with us today.

But we can look at how to apply these principles. So let's do that. Notice here. Joshua calls them. Did you see that? It's not the other way around.

So I think this is kind of a good start here. These eastern tribes, they're not worried about, you know, consumed with, what about us? What about our share?

Where's our land? No, it's a good start. Verse 2, it says, Joshua says to them, You have kept all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you. And you've listened to my voice during this time.

So Joshua here, again, he's acknowledging that you guys, you have kept your end of the deal. Even when there was a change in leadership. And I'll tell you what, when there's a change in leadership, it's at those times when things can become vulnerable.

[12:35] But they kept their word. Verse 3, You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day. You've kept charge of the commandment of the Lord, your God.

These men have been fighting alongside their brothers for land that would never be theirs. Think about that. And I'm sure they're longing to get home, to be with their families.

I want to ask you, how long have they been separated from their families? Do you know it's been estimated by many scholars about seven and a half years that they've been away to complete the fighting.

How many of you would volunteer for a job that might take you seven years away from your family? I'll ask you men that. I'm not going to ask the women that because I think many of you would say, yeah, sign me up.

I'm going to get out of here. But here they did it. Seven and a half years. And notice here, these three tribes, they did what they said that they would do.

[13:44] But I want you to notice something here in our text, in verse 4. Joshua gives the Lord the glory. And that's a really good thing here. Look with me. The Lord your God has given rest to your brothers.

Friends, that's true. And God always deserves the glory. But here's the thing. These tribes cooperated with God. And now they're being appreciated for their part in God's plan.

Moving on in verse 8, Joshua reminds them, hey, don't forget when you go, take those great riches, the livestock, the silver, bronze, gold, iron, all the clothes that you got.

And divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers. In other words, those who stayed behind at the time. And then verse 6, Joshua blessed them, and he sent them away, and they went to their tents.

I imagine here that this was probably a somewhat emotional departure for these guys. I mean, they've been fighting together side by side for at least 7 years.

[14:51] And so what a time it is. There's a graphic here. Michelle, if you would put that up, I have only one little slide here to show. This here, not that one.

That's a nice picture. This here is just a picture of the land after it's all been conquered.

You'll see Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben there on the east side of the Jordan River. And then you also see the other half of Manasseh on the other side along with the tribes of Dan, Ephraim, Judah, and Simeon, and so on.

So you've got to think back in those days, traveling a great distance would have taken some time. They didn't have super highways and cars like we have.

So it would have taken some time to get back and forth. But that's essentially the layout of the whole land of Israel. And so it's really good to see that.

[15:54] Oh, thanks, Michelle. Here's the thing, though. Joshua's in his commencement speech, but he's not done yet. Because the real meat of his commencement address starts in verse 5, if you'd look with me here.

And I think that this is a key verse for this chapter and possibly even the whole book of Joshua.

Here's where this speech becomes distinguished from a lot of commencement speeches that you'll hear today.

Look with me, verse 5. Only be careful to observe the commandment and the law of Moses and the servant of the Lord commanded you to...

And then he gives these five things here. And if you'd follow along with me on your handout, let's look at these together here. First, love the Lord. This is the first thing that's said, and it's first because, friends, it's most important.

I would say that if loving the Lord is not a top priority, then the rest of what you do really doesn't matter, does it?

[17:04] That's what the Scripture teaches us. You may recall that when Joshua spoke to these men in chapter 1, they gave this answer. And they answered Joshua saying, all that you have commanded we will do.

Whatever you send us, we will go. And just as we obeyed Moses, so we will obey. We will do. We will go. We will obey. What do you think about that?

Sounds good, doesn't it? We show our love for God through our obedience. The Bible teaches that. But did you notice that's what's missing?

There's no love of God mentioned. Nothing. Moses spoke about this when he was with him back in Deuteronomy chapter 6. You shall love the Lord your God.

Well, a little bit? No. With all your heart, all your soul, and with all your might. Joshua brings it up just like he did here.

[18:04] Love the Lord. Now, here's a question. Will these three tribes love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might as they move back to the east side of the Jordan?

Secondly, will they, second command, Joshua said to walk in his ways. What does that mean? It means that when our love for God is so strong, we are willing to forego what we want to do, our will and our desires and choose what the Lord wants us to do.

So, he asked this question, Lord, what do you want me to do? I think this is very interesting here in Joshua 14. It tells us that the land for all of the other nine and a half tribes of Israel, you know how they were chosen?

It was chosen by Lot. In other words, Joshua, Eleazar, the priest, and the heads of all the households would all get together and they had these rocks that they would draw out of a bag. That's how you got your portion of land. It was a way to put it into God's hands. That was their theology. But the eastern tribes, not them, they chose their own land.

[19:35] They got what they wanted. And that's because, why? It looked good. It looked good. It's a good place to raise cattle. A good place to

plant a home.

It's interesting that Moses agreed with them. Did you know that there's no record that even Moses consulted the Lord about this? And it makes you wonder, is it a good thing?

Well, Moses apparently thought so. All these tribes thought so. And if you look at some of these things, here, that's going on, Bashan, you'll see one of those words come up.

Bashan in that area is known for its lush, healthy pasture land. And let me read Deuteronomy 32.

Curds of cows, the milk of the flock, fat of the lambs, the rams, the breed of Bashan, and the goats, with the finest of wheat, and the blood of the grapes.

He's describing here this great land that they're seeing from their human eyes. It looks good.

Seems like a good place.

[20:41] Was it? Kind of reminds me of a decision that Lot made when Uncle Abraham gave him his choice. If you look in Genesis 13, I think that's on your handout, it says that Lot lifted up his eyes and he saw the valley of the Jordan, that it was what?

Well watered, everywhere. And then it says that Lot settled in the cities of the valley and he moved his tents as far as, uh-oh, Sodom.

Yeah, it didn't turn out so well. But at the time, it seemed like the right thing to do. Here's the deal. In both of these instances, people are walking by sight and not by faith.

And we need to take, we ought to learn from that. This can cause problems, friend, because like it says in Proverbs 16, there's a way that seems right to us.

Seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. So how will it go for these eastern tribes?

What does God want?

[21:52] Is anybody asking? Will they love the Lord? Will they walk in his ways? Will they continue studying and reading and teaching out of God's word?

Will you and I do this in a church today? Or will our focus here at Bethel be to make people, make people feel better about themselves?

Third thing. I'll get back to that. Third thing. Joshua tells them to hold fast to the Lord.

While they were all together, these twelve tribes, think about how unified they were. They were unified behind a common vision, a common purpose.

They had a common enemy, and they had the Lord that they could go to. Joshua was physically there among them. I'm sure he was pretty accessible for counsel and advice.

[22:56] There's a lot to be said, friends, for having a support system. where there's care, where there's accountability, where you can surround yourself with godly people and walk in God's ways.

The challenge that's facing these Transjordan tribes will be living quite a distance away from the rest of the nation. I want to ask you, how will they fellowship with the other nine and a half tribes? Maybe that won't be important. Also, they will not have easy access to the tabernacle, which is in Shiloh at this time. And also at that time, that's the only place where sacrifices and offerings can be made.

How's that going to go? I guess we didn't think about that. Will they forget who they are? Will they forget about God?

Will they forget about what makes them different from all the other nations? I was considering church life and how we can apply this to us today and, you know, in terms of God's people.

[24:14] Here's a verse that I know some of you have memorized. Hebrews 10, 24. Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another for all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Just a couple things to circle in there. Do you see the day drawing near? Yeah. Do you see the words like encouraging one another and assembling together love and good deeds?

Those are good things, friends. Things that we should not take for granted. My wife and I, we've been watching this, it's on Netflix.

Now, I don't recommend movies on Netflix, but this one I will. It's called The American Gospel. I think it ought to be, please write that down and please look at it.

It ought to be required viewing to come here at Bethel. It is so good. I mean, if you want to know why people are not coming to church today, see this movie and you will understand why.

[25:25] First of all, they spend half of the video talking about what is the gospel and friends, they got some great teaching. It is wonderful.

They talk about what the gospel is and then they launch into what we see today in the church. you don't see the gospel in every church. No, what you see is glitter.

You see excitement. You see no power, no truth that will transform anyone, especially the sinner's heart.

You know, it's just amazing the things. It's alarming and it's entertaining what you'll see. They had one example of a guy coming down from a zip line from the fire loft all the way down.

Imagine, we have Nate here playing his guitar riding a zip line coming down and all the wheels are spinning and there's fireworks going off and people are dancing and I'll tell you what, it's an entertaining thing to see.

[26:30] Most of this is on the word of faith movement because that's what people see and they see entertainment. they are not seeing the true gospel and one of the things that's said is that this false gospel, this therapeutic self-gospel that you want to call it is being imported all across the world.

That's what people see in America, in the American church. That's not our gospel. That is not our gospel, friends. Our gospel is faith alone and Christ alone.

So, by grace alone. And this is what we should major in. Major in the majors and minor in the minors. To be about the gospel of Jesus.

Amen. We need the gospel every day. We do. Love the Lord, your God. Walk in his ways. Hold fast to the Lord.

And then Joshua said, keep his commandments. Not his, the Lord's commandments. What's missing from Joshua's commencement speech?

[27:49] If you read it, you don't see anything about taking it easy, relax, it's time to party. You guys have fought hard, so you deserve a break.

Take it easy. You've earned it. I think in some way, Joshua knew that the real work was ahead of them. It was.

It's just the beginning. Not all the enemy tribes have been driven out quite yet. There's some pockets in there. If you look in chapter 13, you'll get a glimpse of that.

But here's the thing. Will these tribes drive out all the pagans in the land? These pockets. the Lord was faithful, but there's still some pockets of people.

Will they be driven out? Well, maybe they won't because the Israelites, these three tribes, are stuck in the good old days. I put in my time, we've had some great battles.

[28:49] That was 20 years ago. What am I doing now? Maybe they won't because they've become like the pagans. Yeah.

And now they're trying to serve two masters. Does that work? No. Maybe they can't because now they've become so internally divided as tribes that they just can't do it.

They're not unified as a nation anymore. And I'll tell you what, friends, when a group is not unified anymore, how will they stand?

I think this is America's problem right now. There's so much division in this country. To me, it seems like we've crossed the line.

I don't know that we can ever go back. I really don't. I think we are at the mercy of the Lord God himself. And I know when we say our prayers at night, that's what we pray.

[29:52] Lord, please have mercy on us because we have gone astray. We have. What is our hope? Anybody that will come along and try to lead us out of this is mocked and put down.

This is a tough time, friends. May the Lord guide us. May we discern what he would have us do. I think this thing about, that we prayed about, that guy going into that guarded area in Seattle.

That's going to be wonderful. We'll see what happens here. Moses said in Deuteronomy 30, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, that I command you today by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then

you shall live and multiply and the Lord God will bless you in the land that you're entering to take possession of it.

Here's the last one. Joshua told them to serve the Lord with all their heart and soul. That word heart there, that's referring to the inner man, our mind, our intellect, and also our will.

That word soul is talking about just our desire, our passion, our appetites, even our emotions. And they're told to serve the Lord.

[31:24] Are we told that? Yeah, we are. We are told that. This has nothing to do with salvation, friends. Salvation comes first.

And then after that, we're told to serve the Lord. We don't maintain our salvation. No, God preserves us. But we do get to serve him.

We get to participate in his plan. Blessing in one's life is related to our obedience to God. And obedience will be rewarded.

It will. Now, it may not always be by material possessions here and now, but it does lead to blessings. Maybe here, maybe now, surely later when we're with him.

Many believers will start well. They will. But they don't end up well. And that's because they do not persevere.

[32:29] Here's a way if you want to persevere. This is our part. God preserves. We persevere. That's our part.

If you want to persevere, then serve the Lord in a ministry or two. Serve him. Serve other believers. Serve non-believers.

That helps to us to persevere. And so, and when we enter heaven, friends, we will have much, much, much treasure to cast to the Lord at his feet through his worship.

Paul says in Romans 12, I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living, holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

What great truths that we have here. If I could invite you musicians to come. So, I want to close here. How is it going to go for these eastern tribes?

[33:37] I don't think it's going to go real well. This whole section in Joshua 13 that I spoke about earlier, it hints about the conquest of the pagan lands that it was incomplete.

But the main point here for us, we have to remember as New Testament believers, we have it better. Amen. We have Jesus Christ.

He is our champion. He's our warrior. He's our advocate. He is the one who gave his life so that we may have life and life abundantly.

He is our warrior. And so, as we remember that that's how you enter into his rest is to trust wholly in the work that Jesus Christ did.

And so, that's what we can glean out of this. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for these examples that we have. And Lord, we see that we can get a glimpse, Lord, of what you desire for us.

[34:41] we get an even better glimpse, Lord, as we peer into the person and work of Jesus, of who he is to us. He is our champion, Lord.

Lord, we do pray for this country. We pray for each person here that you would instill within us our part of what we can do, Lord.

Perhaps for some of us it's just to pray, Lord, because we don't know what else to do. If we have any interaction, with people, Lord, we ask that you would go before us and change hearts and minds because, Lord, we're just not anybody.

We're your children and we have the spirit of God in us. Help us to obey. Help us to serve you, Lord. Help us to learn of you, Lord, all the dimensions of Jesus.

And we ask this in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.