

**Preaching Christ....  
...by the power of the Holy Spirit  
...and the authority of the Word of God**

**Date:** 13 August 2023  
**Services:** *Across the Diocese*  
**Series:** All about Jesus  
**Title:** Disaster in the promised land  
**Passages:** Joshua - Judges  
**READING:** Joshua 1:1-9

**Outline**

1. **Conquering the promised land**
2. **Excurses: what!?**
3. **I did it may way**
4. **The astonishing love of God**

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God's **people**, in God's **place**, enjoying God's **presence**.

That's where the Bible **begins** // with the account of Adam and Eve

....It's also where the Bible **ends**

Remember? Rev 21:3 - *God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

God's **people**, in God's **place**, enjoying God's **presence**

The whole sweep of the Bible story is of God's grace at work to restore what was lost when Adam and Eve decided to do their own thing

Through **Abraham** he established a people – the nation of Israel

In **Exodus** we saw God's great rescue plan – to bring his people out the cruel slavery of the Egyptians by his power and grace... by the death of a lamb in place of the first born of Israel and his opening and closing of the Red Sea...

And He **commissions** them as his **treasured possession** – **his holy nation**.

He promises them a **place** – the promised **land**

He promises to be **with** them - as symbolised by his presence in the tabernacle and the temple ////

**BUT**.... they blew it...!

They made a calf of gold and bowed down and worshipped it

And then just as they were on the verge of entering the promised land – they couldn't trust that God was sufficiently powerful to put the land he had promised, into their **hands**...

...and so they **forfeited** the blessing of the land... and an entire generation had to wait it out in the desert for 40 years! //

Today as we all too briefly explore Joshua and Judges...

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Moses is **dead**

They have a **new leader** in the person of **Joshua**

And God is preparing his people once **more** to enter into the land he had promised. ///

But here's the question – will they **DO** it this **time**?

**Will** they cross the Jordan and take the **land**?

Will they take the land as they'd been instructed?

**Will** they keep their **eyes** on **God**?

**Will** they trust He is **present** with them? //

**So – here is where we are heading:**

1. **Conquering the promised land**
  2. **WHAT!? – a brief excursus**
  3. **'I did it my way'**
  4. **The astonishing love of God**
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- First

## **1. CONQUERING THE PROMISED LAND**

*Joshua 1 v2 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 them – to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to the Lebanon and from the great river, the Euphrates – and all the Hittite country – to the Great Sea on the west.*

The command? **GO!**

Get ready to cross the Jordan into the land

Now let's think about this: - this would be no small feat!

We're probably talking around 2 million people!

Crossing a river which in flood in the spring was over a kilometre wide!

**And** remember, there were the people **already** living in the land!

It wasn't vacant uninhabited territory...

this must have been an overwhelming prospect for Joshua...

But here's the **promise**:

*v5 – no one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you.*

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God didn't commission Joshua to do **anything** he wasn't going to enable him to **do**

And the promise is two-fold

- (a) That Joshua will be **protected** - no one will be able to stand up against him; and
- (b) That Joshua will **never be alone** – God will be with **him** and never **leave** or **forsake him**

Great promises from God to Joshua

Promises in which he can have **confidence** and from which he can draw **strength**. ///

Now – we're not to just lift this command and promise to Joshua and apply it to our own context... //

But we have commands and promises given to us from which to draw similar confidence and strength

Because – WE are told to go and make disciples – **AND** promised Jesus will be with us to the end of the age.

A **command** and a **promise**

**Go** – and **I will be with you!**

**We** are not sent to do anything by **ourselves** or in our **strength**

God always is **consistent**... - he never **changes** or **fails us**... //

**Trust** that in whatever he's **called** you to **do** – he will be **with you**... ///

Now – as Israel enter the promised land... you will have noticed – they were to **drive out all the inhabitants of the land**...

Not only to **drive them out**, but to **kill** and **destroy**...

And that surely raises some questions we need to explore; so:

## 2. WHAT!?

- Back in Deuteronomy 7 : God said to Israel: *destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy. <sup>3</sup> Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup> for **they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods** ..... For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.*
- Now to our western 21<sup>st</sup> century ears, this sounds **outrageous!**
- How **dare** God put these people out of their land! //
- But friends, this was **God's appropriate judgement** on these peoples for **despicable behaviour** and for their **crude religious practices** which included **child sacrifice, degrading sexual immorality**...
- Think **the TALIBAN** – and **multiply** by quite a few factors!! **Terrible** dark days... **appalling** times... ! //
- We typically cry out today for God to **do something**... "Lord please stop those terrorists from gunning down people and slitting priests' throats and setting off their suicide bombs..." "Please stop the abuse of children..." "God – why don't you **do something!**!" we say...!
- At **THIS** point in history... God **DID** do something... to stop the **abuses** – the **evil** - of the time... to stop

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**idol worship** and **child sacrifice**... and Israel was an instrument in God's hand, of his appropriate judgement. //

- the reason they were to be **completely** wiped out?
- So that they would not be there to influence God's people.
- They were **enemies** of God and of his people... their ongoing influence would be a **disaster**... ///// (indeed... As it turned out to be!!!!)
- Can you imagine a surgeon cutting out just **some** of the cancer from a patient and saying – we'll I'm just going to leave some there because those cancer cells have just as much right to live as all the other cells in the body...!?!? ///
- **Absurd and dangerous...! Deadly in fact!** //
- So – they were to **rid** the land of these evil people... **ENTIRELY!!** ///
- But Israel had **other** plans - Israel's catch cry is

### **3. I DID IT MY WAY**

- Like a toddler trying to take over from its parents – “I want to do it...”
- So the book of **Joshua** is one of conquering the promised land, but not as God had clearly set out...
- and **Judges outlines the failure:** ch 1 – v21 – the **Benjamites** failed to dislodge the **Jebusites**, v27 – **Manasseh** did not drive out the people of **Beth Shan**...  
v29 **Ephraim** did not drive out the **Canaanites**...  
v30 neither did **Zebulun** drive out the **Canaanites**...  
v31 nor did **Asher** drive out those living in **Acco**... etc etc – **you're getting the picture!** /
- Just before Joshua died, he **challenged** Israel – “chose this day whom you will serve – the **God** who brought you out of **Egypt**, or the **gods** of the **nations**.” (Josh 24:15)
- They had made a solemn pledge: “we **WILL** serve the Lord!” //
- But **NOW** – they ended up their own thing... and **because** they failed to drive the people from the land... what do we read???
- Have a look with me at Ch 2 v11 – *Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and **served the Baals**. They **forsook the Lord**, the God of their fathers, **who had brought them out of Egypt**. They followed **and worshipped various gods of the people around them**... //*
- Called to be **uncompromising**... they **compromised**
- Called to stand **out**, they wanted to **blend in!**
- They **claimed** they would **obey**... they **disobeyed**...
- They looked for **easier** ways to serve God than he had **commanded**.
- Their promised **loyalty**, was **gone** /////
- Of course, this still happens among God's people. ///
- I see it in my **own life** //
- I'm called to be **uncompromising**... I **compromise**
- I'm called to stand **out**... and I want to **blend in**

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- I'm called to a life of **obedience**... I **disobey**.
- I look for **easier** ways to serve God than he **commands**.
- I do it **my way!** ///
- And **YOU?** ///
- How **could** they when God in his great mercy and awesome power had rescued them from Egypt to bring them to the **promised Land?** ///
- How **could** I when God in his great mercy and awesome power has **rescued** me from **sin and death** by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus... and brought me into his **family** as one of **his?** /////
- And that is why I want to share with you....

**4. THE ASTONISHING LOVE OF GOD**

- God doesn't give **up** on his people...
- God is **jealous** for **OUR undivided love!**
- You **forsake** him and he will do whatever it takes to **pursue** you...
- ...even if that means for a **time**... you suffer the **consequences** of your sin... until such times as you **wake up** and **call** on **him**...
- And this is what we see **time and time again** in **Judges**.
- Israel **sinned** – following the Canaanite gods and practices...
- God **allows** Israel to be **conquered** and **oppressed** by the **Canaanites**.... as his appropriate **judgement** on them
- Israel would see the **error** of their ways and **repent** and cry out to God for **help**...
- God would raise up a **judge** (or **deliverer** or **saviour**) to **defeat** the enemy and a time of **peace** would break out ///
- Those Judges include Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and perhaps the most famous – **Samson**.
- But **each time** these Judges rescued Israel, eventually Israel would **sin** again and the cycle of rebellion would start **over**. ///
- I want to zoom in and explore just **one example** of this cycle – the story of **Ehud** – the **second Judge** of the book... Glance with me at Judges 3:12-30

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- In v12 – ... Othniel – the first judge had just died... ***Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and because they did this evil the Lord gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel.***
  - v14 tells us they were subject to him for **18 years!**
  - v15 Eventually **they cried out to the Lord**...
  - **And he gave them a deliverer – a saviour... Ehud**...
  - Ehud was left-handed....
  - He sought a private meeting with Eglon... told him he had a **secret message** for him...
  - As he drew close to the King; with his left hand, he drew the sword from his **right thigh**, and drove it into

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Eglon's belly. Ehud **died there** and **then**. ///

- **GOD** is the hero of the story...
- **THEY CALLED OUT TO GOD**
- **GOD RAISED UP EHOUD FOR THEM....**
- God's people are **rescued** and **saved once more!**
- God **in his love** moves to save his people in their **afflictions...**
- ...even those afflictions which he himself brought upon his people because of their **rebellion** against **him!** ///
- Don't some of us need to hear this this morning? – that in our troubles.... Whether the result of our **sins** or **not** – we have a God who doesn't change.... **STILL** a **compassionate** God who **hears** our **cries** for help and comes to **save** us in our **distress?**
- **Such is the astonishing love of God! ///** - even in the face of **repeated rebellion! ///**
- The deliverers God sent in the time of the **Judges** – were **frail human beings... flawed...**
- They could only rescue for a **time...** and the cycle **began** again
- What Judges begs for.... Is a perfect judge, a perfect saviour!
- .... who could come and **BREAK** the cycle... and bring **lasting** peace with God... //
- ...which God does in sending a **deliverer** – a **saviour** – the **Lord Jesus Christ himself...**
- And this Saviour didn't **KILL** to **save...**
- ...he **DIED** to **save...** ///
- And if you call on him **today...** or **have** called on him in the past – then the **restoration** and **peace** you have, will know **no end!! ///**

**Let me close...**

- The book of **Judges** finishes in **chaos**.
- The final chapters are punctuated by a **repeated phrase** so we get the **point**
- Can I show you?
- 17:6 – *In those days Israel had no **king**; everyone did as they saw fit*
- 18:1 – *In those days Israel had no **king***
- 19:1 – *In those days Israel had no **king***
- 21:5 – the very last verse of the book – *In those days Israel had no **king**; everyone did as they saw fit.*
- You can't **miss** the **point....**
- No **leadership...** a complete and utter **leadership vacuum...** no **moral compass whatsoever...** total **chaos** was the result...
- The utter **confusion** of a **depraved people**.
- **Image-making**
- **Idol-worship**

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- **Mixing of religions** – a little bit of **this** – a little bit of **that**
- **Sexual** appetites totally **unchecked** resulting in the most **abhorrent abuse imaginable**.
- **Gang rape, sodomy, murder...**
- **Everyone did as they saw fit. //**
- It's a **depressing end** to the **book...** but it sets the scene for 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings which we'll look at next week.... **///**
- You know.... there was **so much hope and potential** as they prepared to cross the Jordan and enter the **promised land!**
- But – **now what?**
- And what is here for **us?**
- We know we have a better saviour than **Joshua!!**
- ...a better **judge** than all of these **judges** put **together...**
- His name is **Jesus... God saves...!!!**
- And looking at these two books just shows us all the more the great **NEED** that there was, for our Saviour Jesus!
- And now /we put our **hope and trust in him!**
- And we long for that day of his **return**, when the temporary saving we see here will be **permanent** and a repeat of the cycle of rebellion, will never happen again...
- And we respond with awe and wonder **at the God who saves!**