

Sermon on Joshua 1: 6 – 9 – You Are A Leader For Christ!

“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Our Ministry Coordinating Council recently studied a paper entitled, “The Personal Qualities of a Christian Leader.” It began with Aesop’s fable of “The Frogs and Their King.” The frogs in the pond wanted a leader. Again and again they went to Jupiter with their request until he finally tossed a log in the pond hoping to make them happy. For a while the frogs were happy with their leader, but they soon discovered they could jump on him, run all over him, and received no resistance or response from him. Besides this, the log didn’t give them any direction, but simply floated back and forth on the pond. So the frogs went back to Jupiter requesting a stronger leader. This time Jupiter gave them a stork. He stood tall above the frogs and looked like a leader. For a while the frogs were happy with their leader as he strutted around the pond making much noise and attracting much attention. But when he began to hassle them and even devour his subordinates, the frogs soon realized they had another problem. What should you look for in a leader? Logs who let people do whatever they want or storks who tell people what they have to do?

The greatest example of a leader is found in Jesus. Here are “Seven Qualities of a Christian Leader.” A Christian leader follows The Leader as Jesus tells us, *“if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”* A Christian leader serves like The Leader as Jesus tells us, *“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* A Christian leader sets a good example like The Leader as Paul tells us, *“set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”* A Christian leader shares the vision of The Leader as Jesus tells us, *“I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”* A Christian

leader feels for people like The Leader as Matthew tells us, *“when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”* A Christian leader trusts people like The Leader as Jesus tells us, *“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”* Finally, a Christian leader prays like The Leader as Jesus tells us, *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Father...may your will be done.”*

How would you describe your leadership skills compared to The Leader? Daily we realize that we all fall short of the expectations God has of us. Daily we carry our sins to the cross in repentance focusing on the full and free forgiveness that is ours in Jesus. Motivated by this we seek to serve as leaders and followers of our Savior. Yes, ***“You Are a Leader for Christ!”***
I. Be strong and courageous. II. Your Lord is with you wherever you go.

In our text for today we meet up with a leader by the name of Joshua. He had been with Moses since the beginning. In fact, out of all the people who left Egypt, only he and Caleb would enter the Promised Land of Canaan. When the Children of Israel first approached the Promised Land of Canaan, Joshua was one of the twelve spies sent in to check things out. Ten of those spies came back with the report that taking the land of Canaan would be mission impossible. Only Joshua and Caleb came back with the report that taking the land of Canaan was mission possible if they trusted in God. When the majority refused to do that, God punished the Children of Israel with forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Ever the faithful leader and follower, Joshua stood by Moses through thick and thin. Not even Moses would enter the Promised Land of Canaan for disobeying God. God forgave Moses and allowed him to see into the Promised Land of Canaan from high atop Mount Nebo. Moses would never enter the Promised Land of Canaan. You could say that God had a better Promised Land in store for him. Moses died, the Lord buried him, and carried his soul home to be with him in the Promised Land of Heaven. Moses was quite a leader. Concerning him, God’s Word tells us, *“Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.”* Moses was a leader, *“whom the Lord knew face to face.”* After Moses died, God turned to Joshua and said, *“you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.”*

Talk about some big shoes to fill! Can you name the President of the United States of America after George Washington? Who coached the Packers after Vince Lombardi? Who coached the Bears after Mike Ditka? Those are some names that are pretty easy to forget because they were trying to replace people who seemed irreplaceable. Can you imagine the pressure Joshua must have been feeling? Moses had just died and now it was all up to him to lead a nation of close to two million people into the Promised Land of Canaan?!?! Actually it wasn't all up to him, it was all up to God. That's what God told Joshua. *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."*

Easier said than done! Was Joshua up to the challenge? Could he handle it? Would the people listen to him? What if he messed up? What if he wasn't strong enough, smart enough, or good enough? He must have felt like the entire future of the Children of Israel was resting on his shoulders! But notice what God said to Joshua. He didn't point Joshua to Joshua. He pointed Joshua to His promises. God had promised that land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his descendants and when God makes a promise, he keeps it. That's all Joshua needed to know. God's promises are the reason why Joshua could be strong and courageous in the face of overwhelming odds! God's promises are the reason why we can do the same no matter what we're facing in life. It can be easy to rely on ourselves instead of God. It can be easy to think that God should love us, because of all the things we've done to serve him. But then God's Law hits us right between the eyes saying, *"be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it."*

Meditate on God's Word day and night? Do everything written in it? Obey it perfectly? Not just some of the time, but all of the time? The Apostle Paul writes, *"whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things."* God's Law reminds us that our thoughts, words, and actions haven't always been pure and holy. God is patient, but he also says, *"do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked."* Grumbling and complaining, making a mockery of God's Word found an entire generation of people dying in the wilderness before they

reached the Promised Land of Canaan. But worse than that is this. Those who died in their sins with hardened hearts of unbelief didn't enter the Promised Land of Heaven either. The Apostle Paul tells us that these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us so be careful so that you don't fall. *"Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation."* Instead of falling into temptation, fall to your knees in repentance, confessing your sins, looking to Jesus for full and free forgiveness.

For the many times we've failed to be perfect leaders and followers, Jesus was perfect in every way, shape, and form. He never parted from God's Word to the right or to the left. He saw that *"we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."* He carried our sins to the cross where he suffered and died to forgive them. He rose again from the grave to give us the gift of heaven. Through the power of the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament, he made us his own dear children. He leads us through this wilderness of life as he carries us to the Promised Land of Heaven. He's a leader who loves us. He's a leader who trusts us to carry on the work he's given us. That's why we're here at Good Shepherd. We're not just here to give people something to do on Saturday evenings or Sunday mornings. We're here because of the big picture. The big picture found in our mission statement. The Mission of Good Shepherd is to sustain each of our members in the faith by working together in harmony for the spiritual growth and health of the congregation and reaching out to bring the gospel of Christ to others.

God's promises are the basis of our faith and our salvation. They're also the basis for our leadership. There are all sorts of books on leadership out there but only one that comes from the mouth of God himself. God's Word is where we find the guidance to lead and the strength to move forward no matter what's facing us. We install our leaders here at Good Shepherd with the words, *"The Lord does not seek from us what he has not given to us. But when he does give a gift, his will is that we use it faithfully to his glory and for the benefit of his people."* Dear friends in Christ, you are a gifted servant of your master. You are a leader for Christ. So be strong and courageous for the Lord will be with you wherever you go.

Amen.