

VPBC 19th April 2020 – Pre-recorded message for webcast Take Courage – Josh 1:1–9

I'm not sure how long it is now since the beginning of your pastoral vacancy, at Aldersbrook we are 10 months into ours, I think you are a little further along than that. I've been through this process once before and what I said to my church then is what I would say to you. This time is journey. We're not sure of the destination or of the timing. And now on top of that we all face this other journey, the journey through the pandemic, which for many people is a real wilderness.

There are many different journeys in the Bible that I could speak about and this morning I want to look at the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land. Now please don't worry because I'm sure that neither your pastoral vacancy nor the coronavirus crisis is going to take 40 years, but I want us to look at how the Israelites journey developed as Israel entered into the promised land.

[Read Josh 1:1–9] – this can be found at the bottom of this document

As they crossed the Jordan they faced a new challenge in effect another journey and as they and we come to terms with that people have two choices in how to react, two ways to respond. For some it may be all too much. "I just want to rest, I want some stability, isn't 40 years enough, isn't four weeks lockdown enough". On the other hand this is amazing, we're standing here on the edge of God's great blessing with an amazing promise that God is going to give us every place our feet tread. At Aldersbrook whilst we desperately miss gathering together, we are having

more prayer meetings, doing more outreach having more people in our virtual zoom service, than we did when the doors were open.

I don't know about you, but I have found myself watching the news an awful lot more than I used to. And the news right now is not good. Worldwide over 2.3 million cases and almost 160,000 deaths and here in the UK over 110,000 cases and more than 15,000 deaths. The truth is frightening. And yet in 2 Timothy 1:7 God says;

["For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."](#)

In Josh 1:9 God tells us;

["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."](#)

Do you feel strong? Do you feel courageous? Well for me not really. Am I terrified? – well maybe not terrified, but a little scared. Am I discouraged? – yes and no.

'Be strong and courageous'. Courage isn't an overwhelming confidence that something will be trouble free and easily accomplished.

["Courage is fear that has said its prayers." – General George Patton](#)

It's OK to be scared, which is a strange thing to say when the next words are don't be frightened. The difference is that its OK to be apprehensive when we're facing a new challenge, its OK to be scared when you're not sure you can manage the task ahead. What God is saying is don't let that fear overwhelm you, don't be dismayed, don't live in despair, because God is with you. The LORD your God is with you wherever you go, whatever this new

journey holds you're not alone God is with you, we're not alone God is with us.

In Hebrews chapter 11 we find a list of "heroes of the faith", men and women who had played their part in God's story of redemption. Here are people who in their own time and in their own way were "strong and courageous". And it is helpful for us to have these people listed out like this as it is easier to focus on good examples of faith living, of being strong and courageous than it is to follow abstract principles.

We have listed here for us some mini pictures of those who are commended by God for their faith. Starting with Abel through Noah, Abraham and Moses. We have women here also, Sarah and Rahab and finally we find that we don't have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets.

So there you have it. Be inspired, be courageous, just have faith like Abraham, Moses and David and everything will be fine. The problem is I'm not like them, I don't know about you, but I'm not. And that's the problem with heroes we love to look at them and be inspired by them, but I don't have a cape and if I wore my underpants outside my trousers I still won't be able to fly. It's one thing to be inspired by someone else but if we can't identify with them then they just become another superman.

But if we look at our "heroes" more closely we see they are far from perfect. Verse 13 says;

["All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance."](#)

All the men and women listed were people of the future, they didn't dwell on their past, or even on the present, they looked to

the future. That's what faith is about "faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

In interviews with emergency workers in NYC many have made comparisons to 9/11. I don't know if you remember but on that terrible day four planes were hijacked but only three reached their targets. The fourth crashed in a field due in part to the actions of a man named Todd Beamer. He learned by telephone that other hijackings had taken place that morning and he guessed that his flight might also be used to kill great numbers on the ground. Before Todd Beamer and his fellow passengers attempted to jump the terrorists who guarded them, he asked the operator to pray with him over the phone and they said the 23rd Psalm together. The last words heard from Beamer constituted a charge to his fellow passengers, "Let's roll!" and he and others sacrificed their own lives to save the lives of many others.

This man Todd Beamer looked to the future. Now I don't know what he was like and reports rightly focus on his good qualities, but I'm pretty sure he was an ordinary man, that he worried about things, that he got frustrated and angry from time to time, and that in his youth he probably did some things he regretted. But that didn't stop him, there on the plane his past didn't matter, even his present circumstances were secondary, what mattered was that he acted to affect the future, the future of those who were the target of that fourth plane.

Todd Beamer was a future person, the heroes of Hebrews 11 were future people, Jesus was a future person. He didn't live his life on earth for fun, for adventure, for safety or for comfort, His eyes were fixed on the glory to come and His reward, our salvation. And just like all these people we are people of the future and that's why we can take courage. Hebrew 12 goes on;

“¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.”

So, as we face restrictions like we have never know and frightening news every day, let us be strong and courageous, whatever we feel.

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.”

Amen!

Joshua 1:1–9 (ESV)

¹After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, ²“Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”