



+

This Sunday at MRC we considered why the Lord seems to 'press pause' on the narrative of Joshua at chapter 5v2. Last week as they headed over the Jordan the account ended in 4v24 with the promise that the nations would hear and the people would fear the Lord due to his power. 5v1 begins with 2 neighbouring nations afraid and melting, but then in 5v2, just when it seems like momentum is building, all systems are go and the people ought to be getting with the job... the focus alters as the people enter the land.

Why? This is a chapter that focuses on faithfulness before fruitfulness, on godliness before activity and activism, on remembering who we are before we get on with what we do. This is the calm before the storm as the people of God are to remember who they are (and who's they are) before they venture on with their task. This is clear in the passage as 'structurally' there are 2 'The Lord said to Joshuas' (v2 and v9) outlining the sections and foci of the pause:

1) A people who entrust themselves to the faithfulness of God (v2-8)

From v2-8 it becomes clear that, through their wilderness wanderings, the people of God born in the wilderness, had not kept the covenant to mark them out as his by means of circumcision. We looked at Genesis 17v4-14 to see what circumcision means (here, namely entrusting themselves to God and his covenant promises) but also what circumcision pointed to from Deut 30v6 (see also 10v16): Moses looked ahead before he died to a time when the people's hearts would be circumcised - they were to be marked out as his by internal rather than external transformation. Paul then in Colossians 2v11-12 equates the blessings of the New Covenant with the blessings of heart circumcision.

As the people enter the land they were promised so they, unlike their parents, are to show their commitment and faithfulness to the God of covenant who has made

them promises. We saw how this heart circumcision concept links directly with baptism, however the principle is a principle of re-committing to God, before activity and getting on with the tasks at hand. By circumcision the people are remembering that they belong to the Lord and the land that he has promised them.

2) A people reliant upon the provision of God (v9-12)

As the newly circumcised nation they are then to remember their God who provides for them and look ahead with a new status - specifically in v9 their shame of Egypt, has been rolled away, in v10 they're to remember the Passover but also then in v11-12 they're provided for in the land as the manna stops coming and they are able to eat of the produce of Canaan. Manna was what a journeying people needed. Now they are 'home' they are able to be self-sufficient.

We also mentioned that this account ought to give us a 'humble hope'. The first generation who (1 Cor 10v1-5) enjoyed the blessings of God but turned their backs on him were succeeded by a generation who did trust Him and who's promises came to pass. In our world where we see churches closing due to unfaithfulness or the gospel being sidelined, we should also expect to see churches planted where faithful Christians keep trusting and God answers their prayers. At a larger scale where in the West we have (largely) turned backs on the gospel we should not be surprised to see a revival in the 'global south' where there are many thousands coming into churches as the Lord is trusted and his message is believed.

Our challenge is engage not in activism for activism's sake, but because we know and love the Lord, taking time to pause and re-commit to him, remembering who we are and who he is.

+++++

As always here are some starter questions, feel free to tweak as needed

- Are you busy? Where is it good to be busy and have full lives? Where are the dangers though?
- What have we seen so far in Joshua? What have been the encouragements for you from the first 4 chapters? What have been the challenges?
- Why does the Lord 'press pause' on the story as the people head into the land?
- What in particular are they to do? Why do these things matter? Have a look at Gen 17, Deut 30 and Col 2 if needed.
- Compare and contrast the 2 generations under scrutiny. What is the second generation to learn?
- What does it mean to have reproach rolled away? Why might this matter here?
- Why do you think the writer outlines that they ate the produce of Canaan?
- Why can we have a 'humble hope' as we consider these 2 generations?