

Dishman Sending Service

Resources for Advancing God's Kingdom

Joshua 1:1-9

Rev. Freddy Fritz

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Scripture

Today is a very special day in the life of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church. Jesus once said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37–38). Today the Lord of the harvest is sending out one of our very own communicant members into his harvest.

Lauren Fritz became a communicant member of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church on October 10, 2002 during her freshman year in high school. She completed high school, college, and then taught for several years. She connected with Peter Dishman in 2011, and they were married in December 2013.

God has called the Dishmans to serve him in South America through a strategic partnership between Mission to the World (MTW) and Reformed University Fellowship (RUF), the missions and campus ministry arms of the Presbyterian Church in America.

Peter holds a MDiv from Covenant Seminary, is an ordained minister in the PCA, and brings his past experience of starting the first RUF-Global chapter in Mexico City to this new call. Lauren holds a MA in Theological Studies from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, has taught high school Bible and humanities for several years, and loves the university campus.

Together, Peter and Lauren hope to plant a new chapter of RUF-Global in Bogota, Colombia, known as the Athens of South America for its more than one hundred institutions of higher learning. Their desire is to engage the campuses of the capital with the good news that Jesus brings through his life, death, resurrection, and rule, and to connect them with his church for the sake of the city.

My interest in this “Sending Service” stems from one I attended shortly after graduating from the University of Cape Town. I attended a Sending Service for a couple who were going to serve the Lord as missionaries in Lebanon. That had a profound impact on me,

and no doubt contributed to my own sense of call to vocational ministry. It is my prayer that there are some people sitting in this Sending Service today who will sense God's call to vocational ministry.

So, with that in mind, please turn to Joshua 1:1-9. The context is that Moses, the great leader of the Israelites, has died. The mantle of leadership is now being passed on to Joshua. This passage is the Lord's charge to Joshua as he assumes his place of leadership in advancing God's kingdom. Let us read Joshua 1:1-9:

¹ After 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. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From 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. ⁵ No 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. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only 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. ⁸ This 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. ⁹ Have 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." (Joshua 1:1-9)

Introduction

The church I attended in Cape Town before I came to the United States was a large, growing, vibrant church with over 1,000 members at the time I left. The pastor of our church was a faithful,

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powerful, gifted, and evangelistic expositor of God's Word.

Many people felt that the key to our church's phenomenal growth and influence in the city was due to our pastor, the Rev. Frank Retief. Some even believed that if anything serious should happen to Rev. Retief, then the church would suffer permanent loss.

Gone would be the powerful preaching. Gone would be the phenomenal growth. Gone would be the widespread influence. Gone would be the effective evangelism.

I can remember many times when Rev. Retief exhorted our congregation not to put our trust in him, but to put our trust in God. He told us that God is the one who raises up leaders and that he will never leave his children as orphans. We could trust God to take care of us if something unforeseen should happen to him.

I believe that our church in Cape Town experienced in some small measure what the people of God experienced after the death of Moses.

Moses was an extraordinarily great leader. There was no one like Moses. There was no one as great as Moses until the One greater than Moses came. Moses spoke with God face to face. Moses led the Israelites to the very brink of the Promised Land. . . and then died. And when Moses died there was incredible despair among the people of God.

But though Moses had died, God did not leave Israel without leadership and purpose and direction. When God removes his anointed leaders, he does not leave his people without leadership and purpose and direction. That is the message that Rev. Retief wanted our congregation to understand. And this is what Joshua wanted his congregation – the children of Israel – to understand also.

Lesson

Joshua helps us understand that God is advancing his kingdom. He provides us with all of the necessary resources to participate in the advancement of his kingdom. So, today, let us understand that because God is advancing his kingdom, we must use the resources he has provided.

I. Remember the Continuity of God's Promise (1:1-4)

First, because God is advancing his kingdom, remember the continuity of his promise.

God's promise is given in Joshua 1:2-4, where we read:

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.”

What is the promise? The promise is a gift of land to the Israelites by God.

The important point about the land is that this is the same promise God made to Abraham almost 500 hundred years earlier. God said to Abraham, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).

So a promise made almost 500 years earlier is now about to receive its fulfillment. For 500 hundred years the people of God must have wondered about the certainty of the promise of God. But God *always* keeps his promises.

Donald Grey Barnhouse, pastor of the historic Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia many years ago, told a story that took place at the Onesto Hotel in Canton, Ohio. A porter – whom he knew quite well – took him to his room. They began talking about the certainty of God's promises. Barnhouse had not yet given the porter his tip, and he asked the porter how much money he had in his pocket. The porter counted it, and found that he had \$1.19 in his pocket. It was Tuesday, and the porter told Barnhouse that he would not get paid until Friday. Until then he had to support his family with the few tips he made.

Barnhouse placed a fifty-cent piece – a lot of money in those

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days – in the porter’s hand, and said, “I give you this half dollar. Now how much do you have?”

“\$1.69,” the porter replied.

After some further discussion, Barnhouse took the coin and put it back in his pocket. Then he asked the porter, “Now how much do you have?”

“\$1.19,” the porter answered.

“Did I not *give* you the half-dollar?” Barnhouse asked.

“Yes.”

“And didn’t you tell me that it was yours?”

“Yes.”

“Then am I a liar?”

“No.”

“So how much money do you have?”

The porter smiled and said, “I have \$1.69, but fifty cents of it is in your pocket.”

Barnhouse then gave the porter the fifty cents (who put it in his own pocket), but more importantly, he had given the porter a lesson about the certainty of the promises of God.

God had promised the land to Abraham and to his children. His promise was certain of fulfillment. Now, 500 years later, the children of Abraham were about to “pocket” the promise of God.

Now, the *context* of the promise is particularly significant. The context of the present promise is given in verse 1, **“After the death of Moses. . . .”**

“Moses my servant has died,” God says, “now, rise, cross over this Jordan. . . into the land which I am giving to you.”

As I mentioned earlier, Moses was an extraordinarily great leader. It is against this background of the death of Moses that Joshua sets the continuity of God’s promise.

Moses may die, but the promise of God lives on. An era may pass, but the promise endures. Circumstances may change, but God’s promises do not. God’s faithfulness to his promise does not hinge on the achievements of men, no matter how gifted they may be, nor does it evaporate in the face of changing circumstances.

God’s Word is filled with promises to his people. And I stand

here today to tell you that you can trust God to fulfill his promises. God's kingdom is advancing. He is still bringing people, as it were, into the Promised Land.

If you are a Christian here today, remember that God has called you to service in the advancement of his kingdom. And you are to remember that God's promises never fail.

What are God's promises? Some of God's promises were fulfilled in history. Others were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But there are still hundreds of promises in his Word that are for us today. Promises such as, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), and "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Lauren and Peter, as you head off to Bogota, I also want you to remember that God's promises never fail. Remember that God is advancing his kingdom. And remember that every single promise he has ever made will never fail. So you can go with confidence, certain of God's promises.

Russell Kelso Carter wrote a hymn in 1886 titled, "Standing on the Promises." If you ever doubt the promises of God, write the second stanza of the hymn in the flyleaf of your Bible:

*Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.*

II. Receive the Encouragement of God's Presence (1:5-6, 9)

Second, because God is advancing his kingdom, receive the encouragement of his presence.

God encourages Joshua with his presence in verse 5b: **"Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."**

Retired PCA pastor and commentator, Ralph Davis, says, "It is interesting to note that these simple words were spoken once before

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to a very reticent, backward, excuse-making, ask-George-not-me sort of fellow, that is, Moses, in Exodus 3:12, when he was called to face both Israel and Pharaoh.”

God said to Moses in Exodus 3:12, “I will be with you.”

The same God, who once promised his presence to Moses, now gives the same assurance in similar threatening circumstances to Joshua.

Moses has died, but God has not changed. He is still God, the God who is present with his servant to help and deliver.

It is because of the assurance of God’s presence that he can say to Joshua in verses 6, 7, and 9: **“Be strong and courageous.”**

Joshua is not told to grit his teeth and screw up his courage on his own. He is to **be strong and courageous** only because God has promised to be with him and not because God prefers leaders who are positive thinkers.

“But,” you say, “I can see why God would be with Joshua. After all, he was an important character, and he had to lead the nation of Israel. I am just a plain Christian, and I am not sure that the promise of God’s presence is for me.”

The same promise that God made to Joshua is repeated by Jesus to all of his disciples in Matthew 28:20b, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The promise of God’s presence is in fact for all Christians.

Lauren and Peter, God is advancing his kingdom, and so be encouraged by his presence. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, God is with you, helping you to serve him faithfully. He says to you, as he said to Joshua, **“Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.”**

Archibald Naismith, a missionary to India, once visited Aberdeen, Scotland. While on a tour of the city, his host told him about a very godly lady who lived in tremendous poverty. Even though she was extremely poor, she was well known everywhere for cheerfulness amid her poverty.

One time when a visiting preacher was in town, he asked if he could visit with the poor lady. When he saw her bright and radiant face, he said to her, “My dear sister, they tell me the Lord Jesus

Christ visits this place.”

In her thick Scottish brogue the lady replied, “Na, na, ma laddie, ye’re wrang!”

Thinking she was a little hard of hearing, the preacher raised his voice and repeated his question, “My dear sister, they tell me the Lord Jesus Christ visits this place.”

Again she said, “Ye’re wrang! ye’re wrang!”

Convinced that she was deaf, he practically shouted in her ear, “Sister, doesn’t the Lord Jesus Christ visit your home?”

Shaking her head again, she said, “Na, laddie, ye’re wrang! Jesus Christ *abides* here!”

This godly lady understood that Jesus doesn’t make his presence known occasionally; he is *always* present.

Lauren and Peter, God is advancing his kingdom. As you serve in his kingdom, you can be encouraged by God’s promise of his abiding presence.

III. Acknowledge the Centrality of God’s Word (1:7-8)

And third, because God is advancing his kingdom, acknowledge the centrality of his Word.

In verse 7 God tells Joshua to **be strong and very courageous**. And then he says, “. . . **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. . . .**” So God calls Joshua to walk in obedience.

But then God gives Joshua the formula that leads to such obedience. He says in verse 8: **“This 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.”**

What God says here is that constant, careful absorbing of the Word of God leads to obedience to it. And the converse is also true: lack of study results in lack of obedience.

Again, this is a command that is specifically given to Joshua.

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But the principle is true for every child of God.

The Psalmist speaks about the man of God in Psalm 1:2, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.” This verse describes what should be true of every godly believer. The Word of God should be every believer’s delight. And every believer should obey the Word of God.

Boris Kornfeld was a Russian Jew who, somewhere along the way, came to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. For some reason he found himself incarcerated as a political subversive in the early 1950s at Ekibastuz.

Because Kornfeld was a doctor he was immediately pressed into duty at the Russian concentration camp. He witnessed indescribable horrors at Ekibastuz. He wondered about the futility of his efforts. He would be ordered to treat patients only so that they could then be “properly” tortured and killed.

During his time at Ekibastuz Kornfeld meditated on the Word of God. He determined to walk in obedience to God as best he could in those unspeakably terrible circumstances. One day he decided that he could no longer sign the forms certifying that a prisoner was strong and healthy enough to withstand punishment. He knew that he was endangering his own position, but he no longer could sign the forms.

Kornfeld’s actions angered the Camp Commandant. When it became known that Kornfeld was no longer signing the forms, he knew that it was only a matter of time before he would be murdered.

Sensing that he had limited time, Kornfeld felt compelled to tell someone about his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Meditation on God’s Word led him to obedience. And obedience to God’s Word led him to share the gospel.

His opportunity came. One gray afternoon he examined a patient who had just been operated on for cancer of the intestines. The young man’s eyes were sorrowful and suspicious, and they reflected a depth of spiritual misery and emptiness that Kornfeld had rarely seen.

So Kornfeld began to share with this young patient the story of what God had done in his life. With compelling urgency he shared

his story, and with captivated interest the young man listened. Finally, Dr. Kornfeld described his conversion to Christ and his freedom despite being imprisoned in a Russian concentration camp. As Kornfeld finished his story, the patient drifted into sleep, surprised at how drawn he felt to Kornfeld's Christ.

In the morning the patient was awakened by the sound of running feet and a commotion in the camp emergency room. Then a fellow patient whispered the news. During the night, while Dr. Kornfeld slept, someone had crept up beside him and smashed his head with a plasterer's mallet. And though his fellow doctors worked valiantly to save him, it was not long before the orderlies carried out a still, broken form.

But Dr. Kornfeld's testimony did not die.

The patient pondered Kornfeld's last, impassioned words. As a result, he, too, became a Christian. He survived that prison camp and went on to tell the world what he had learned from a man whose life was committed to obeying and proclaiming the Word of God.

The patient's name was Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Today, we know of Alexander Solzhenitsyn through his writing and also through his Nobel Prize for Literature.

Lauren and Peter, brothers and sisters, you and I preeminently acknowledge the centrality of God's Word by obeying and proclaiming it. Whether we are in the neighborhoods of Tampa, Florida or Bogota, Colombia, God's kingdom advances as we acknowledge the centrality of his Word.

Conclusion

God's kingdom is advancing. Use the resources he has provided. Remember that you have God's promises, God's presence, and God's Word. And, as Ralph Davis says, "that should be enough until the kingdom of God comes in power and great glory." Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
3. www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=FreddyFritz

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PRAYER:

Our Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for the resources that you provide to advance your kingdom. Help all of us to remember that we have your promises, your presence, and your Word to advance your kingdom.

And all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!