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June 3rd: Joshua 1 & Luke 18:31–19:10

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Joshua takes leadership. Jesus goes to Jericho.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

Joshua 1. After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 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. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.

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. 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. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 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. 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.

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. And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.

And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, the Lord your God is providing you a place of rest, and will give you this land. Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan. But all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers, and shall help them, until the Lord gives rest to your brothers as he has to you.

And they also take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession, and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan, toward the sunrise. And they answer Joshua, all that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.

Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death.

Only be strong and courageous. Joshua chapter 1 is a chapter that falls into two halves. God commissions Joshua in verses 1 to 9 and Joshua takes leadership in verses 10 to 18.

There are four speeches. The Lord speaks to Joshua in verses 2 to 9, Joshua to the commanders of the people in verses 10 to 11, Joshua to the Transjordanian tribes in verses 12 to 15, then the Transjordanian tribes speak to Joshua in verses 16 to 18. The opening verse situates us after the death of Moses, just as Joshua is about to cross over the Jordan.

This is a transition between a wilderness and a land leader. It's not the only time that this will occur around that point near the Jordan. We see a similar thing in 2nd Kings chapter 2 as Elijah ascends into heaven and Elisha takes his place as the leader that

goes into the land.

And then again of course in the story of Jesus and John the Baptist. There is a repetition of some earlier phrases that we've read in Deuteronomy chapter 11 verse 24 for instance, every place on which the sole of your foot tread shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the river the Euphrates to the Western Sea.

Joshua is a different kind of leader from Moses. He was Moses' assistant but he doesn't have the same prophetic force to his leadership. He does not go up to the Lord's presence as Moses did on Sinai.

He is not the intermediary that Moses was. While he represents a continuation of Moses' ministry in some senses as his assistant, he is much more associated with the people than Moses ever was. Moses always stood over against the people as the representative of the Lord to them, as the great prophetic leader.

The Lord called Moses as someone who was not closely associated with the people he was being sent to deliver, as someone who'd been living in Midian for decades and in Egypt with the Egyptians before that. The Lord called and commissioned him alone and then sent him to lead the people. The Israelites regarded Moses as if he were some sort of demigod.

Joshua however was a member of the people. He had been one of the spies sent into Canaan as a representative of his tribe. He was commissioned before them by Moses at the end of Numbers.

At the end of this chapter the Israelites reaffirm and remind him of his commission. This would never have happened with Moses in that way. Joshua then represents a new form of leadership for a more mature Israel.

Israel has now graduated beyond their need for Moses' intensely top-down leadership. However the Lord assures Joshua that he will be with him in much the same way as he was with Moses. There are promises given specifically to Joshua here, that the Lord will be with him, that he will give him every place where he treads, that he will never leave or forsake him, that no one will be able to stand before him etc.

And these promises are also given to Israel more generally elsewhere. The parallels between the promises and the charges given to Israel and those given to Joshua are more explicitly seen in Deuteronomy chapter 31 verses 1 to 8. So Moses continued to speak these words to all Israel and he said to them, I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in.

The Lord has said to me, you shall not go over this Jordan. The Lord your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you so that you shall dispossess

them.

And Joshua will go over at your head as the Lord has spoken. And the Lord will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land when he destroyed them. And the Lord will give them over to you and you shall do to them according to the whole commandment that I have commanded you.

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.

Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, be strong and courageous for you shall go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them. And you shall put them in possession of it. It is the Lord who goes before you.

He will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

Comparing this with Joshua chapter 1 we should observe that much of Joshua chapter 1 is the Lord reiterating to Joshua what Moses had told him earlier with all Israel as witness. Then at the end of the chapter the Transjordanian tribes reaffirm the statement of Moses and the Lord concerning Joshua's leadership and present him with the same charge that Moses had delivered to Joshua before his death in their presence. The charge given to Joshua here is similar to the charge given to Solomon by David in 1st Kings chapter 2 verse 1 to 4. When David's time to die drew near he commanded Solomon his son saying I am about to go the way of all the earth be strong and show yourself a man and keep the charge of the Lord your God walking in his ways and keeping his statutes his commandments his rules and his testimonies as it is written in the law of Moses that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn that the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me saying if your sons pay close attention to their way to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel and then in 1st Chronicles chapter 28 verses 20 to 21 then David said to Solomon his son be strong and courageous and do it do not be afraid and do not be dismayed for the Lord God even my God is with you he will not leave you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished and behold the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God and with you in all the work will be every willing man who has skill for any kind of service also the officers and all the people will be holy at your command there is transition occurring here is similar to that that occurs between David and Solomon however with the passing of Moses the leadership of the Lord of the people the fact that the Lord is the king of Israel is going to come into much sharper focus Joshua is especially charged to pay attention to the law he is to meditate on it day and night he is not a king but the requirements given to the king in Deuteronomy chapter 17 verses 18 to 20 seem to be in the background of the Lord's instruction to him here and when he sits on the throne of

his kingdom he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law approved by the Levitical priests and it shall be with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers and that he may not turn aside from the commandment either to the right hand or to the left so that he may continue long in his kingdom he and his children in Israel Joshua prepares the people to cross over the Jordan in three days time verses 10 to 11 are his first commands it's a sign of him assuming his role as the leader of the people at their head he directly addresses the trans Jordanian tribes Reuben Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh who had their territory outside of the promised land proper on the far side of the Jordan they are instructed to go before the rest of Israel into the land as they had promised to do in numbers chapter 32 in this way they will represent the unity of the nation in their taking possession of the land that the Lord has given to them the trans Jordanian tribes given exemplary response to Joshua they express their commitment to follow him they declare that those who resist Joshua's leadership should be put to death they desire him to be faithful to the Lord's charge to him and for the Lord to bless him and his leadership as he blessed Moses Joshua's leadership is being characterized here Joshua is not a prophetic leader managing a rebellious people through great judgments he faces a very different situation from Moses he is a leader who has a people behind him the people see themselves in Joshua in a way that they did not seemingly see themselves and Moses Moses tended to represent the Lord over against the people whereas Joshua represents the people far more effectively this is a people who can own their leadership in a new way a question to consider the charge to be strong and courageous given to Joshua is repeated four times in this chapter three times by the Lord and then once by the trans Jordanian tribes why is this particular charge so accented Luke chapter 18 verse 31 to chapter 19 verse 10 and taking the 12 he said to them see we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished for he will be delivered over to the Gentiles will be marked and shamefully treated and spit upon and after flogging him they will kill him and on the third day he will rise but they understood none of these things this saying was hidden from them and they did not grasp what was said as he drew near to Jericho a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging and hearing a crowd go by he inquired what this meant they told him Jesus of Nazareth is passing by and he cried out Jesus son of David have mercy on me and those who were in front rebuked him telling him to be silent but he cried out all the more son of David have mercy on me and Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him and when he came near he asked him what do you want me to do for you he said Lord let me recover my sight and Jesus said to him recover your sight your faith has made you well and immediately he recovered his sight and followed him glorifying God and all the people when they saw it gave praise to God he entered Jericho and was passing through and behold there was a man named Zacchaeus he was a cheap tax collector and was rich and he was seeking to see who Jesus was but on account of the crowd he could not because he was small in stature so

he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him for he was about to pass that way and when Jesus came to the place he looked up and said to him Zacchaeus hurry and come down for I must stay at your house today so he hurried and came down and received him joyfully when they saw it they all grumbled he has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner and Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord behold Lord the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything I restore it fourfold and Jesus said to him today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost towards the end of Luke chapter 18 Jesus gives the third prediction of his death it's important that Jesus declares his death to the 12 beforehand Jesus is going up to Jerusalem he's ascending to the place where he will be condemned and crucified this is not an accident it's not someone caught in circumstance beyond his control Jesus predicts in clear and explicit detail what will happen who will the participants be and what exactly they will do and furthermore all of this is happening in fulfillment of what the prophets declared would happen to the Son of Man God is in control and Jesus as the Son of Man is in control of his fate Jesus nears Jericho with the crowd and he's surrounded with a great many people excited by this potential Messiah this prophet and teacher and a blind man calls out to him as the Son of David this is the first time that Jesus has been addressed in this way during his ministry in the gospel the messianic secret perhaps has slipped and the time is nearing for open revelation of Jesus identity this blind man is the first person beyond the disciples to speak of Jesus openly in this way once again there's someone socially marginal without status who wishes to get close to Jesus but is rebuked by others once again Jesus insists that the person be allowed access to him and explicitly calls for him Jesus declares that his faith has made him well his faith here seems to be shown in his persistence on the basis of his confidence that Jesus has the capacity and the willingness to heal him he also perceives even in his blindness who Jesus really is before almost anyone else the man by the side of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho needing assistance with everyone passing by might also remind us of the parable of the Good Samaritan while others ask what they must do to receive the kingdom and other things like that the blind man begs for mercy and is asked by Jesus what he should do for him there is perhaps some irony here our fixation can often be upon what we must do when all we had to do was ask for mercy it's like pulling a door that says push the city is Jericho which has a history Jericho is the only city mentioned on the itinerary of the travel narrative that takes up a third of the Gospel of Luke I've already mentioned the possible connection of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho in the parable of Good Samaritan now mirrored in the road from Jericho to Jerusalem the city of Jericho had previously been visited by a namesake of Jesus Joshua when Joshua had visited back in the book of Joshua a prostitute was saved but the city was destroyed and now a tax collector is saved as a new Joshua visits the city we are told the species of the tree that Zacchaeus climbed it's a fig mulberry like the tree symbolizing Israel potentially in chapter 17 verse 6 it is likely that we're supposed to make something of this fact although I'm not sure exactly what we should make of it

Zacchaeus gets right with the poor and he restores fourfold of what he owes this degree of restitution is mentioned in Exodus chapter 22 verse 1 and in 2nd Samuel chapter 12 verse 6 when David responds to the parable of Nathan the prophet Exodus chapter 22 verse 1 reads if a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it he shall repay five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep there are ways in which this story draws together a great many of the themes that have been at play in the travel narrative of the last few chapters Zacchaeus is a tax collector that Jesus eats with eating with the tax collectors was the cause of the controversy in chapter 15 at the very beginning the people are grumbling about this fact much as they did back then Zacchaeus is also a rich man who has saved and who sells his possessions and gives to the poor unlike the rich ruler in the preceding chapter Jesus also describes him as a son of Abraham this continues the theme of the redefinition of the family of Abraham but also the theme of the recovery of his lost children Zacchaeus is a restored son and he offers restitution for a stolen sheep maybe both of these things call back to the parables in chapter 15 a question to consider Zacchaeus his repentance and salvation is manifested and demonstrated in his new way of treating his wealth how does this fit in with broader themes of Luke's gospel what lessons might it hold for us