

Entering a new land #1

Where are we?

- Where were God's people at the beginning of the book of Joshua?
 - outside, external to the land of God's promise
 - not yet where God intended to take them...
 - yes, they'd followed him to this point, but he had more in store for them...
- Suggest we are in the same situation, in some ways, today
 - not yet in the place that God is calling us to be...
 - having followed him faithfully up to this point...
 - but being invited to take a huge step of faith, and enter into the taking of a new land (which is also an old land) for God...

Change!

Homes

- Squatters rights, outside loos, coal fires, single glazing...
 - secure tenancies and many home owners, multiple toilets, wetrooms, almost universal central heating, double or even triple glazing...

Work

- Manual, dangerous, culture of job for life, majority of men...
 - less manual, less dangerous, more often jobs of the mind, less security of tenure, multiple careers...

Communication

- Letters and telegrams, occasional phone calls, radio and no TV!
 - e-mail, text, smartphones and mobiles, internet and digital TV, iPlayer...

Family

- (Mythical?) Nuclear family, with siblings and in-laws around, stoicism and duty
 - divorce and separation, desire for fulfilment, serial monogamy, complicated relationships!

Transport

- (*How far is Motherwell from Glasgow?...*)

Formality

- Upper class, middle class, lower class sketch - two Ronnies and John Cleese; workplaces, minister, school...
 - informality, clothing and address, won respect not positional respect?

Morality

- Clear concept of right and wrong, even if not adhered to
 - moral ambiguity, of how much harm actions do to others, and yet harsh declamations against the **evil** of certain crimes, especially child sexual abuse

Church

- Accepted, central to fabric of society, majority opinion, formal, emphasis on right and wrong. Men only in ministry etc...
 - peripheral, mocked and pilloried, remnant at best, more of an emphasis on relationship with God...
- And yet, in some ways, we still act and relate in the same kinds of ways...
 - sermon, Sunday worship, Sunday School and organisations, stand up to sing, one person speaking...
 - we have become disconnected from the society around us, in style if not in substance

Where does God call us to be?

- Jesus' command: **go and make disciples**
- Jesus' example, who left heaven behind to come to sinful humanity
- Or, as here: **you, and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan river into the land I am about to give to them**
 - a land which they are to conquer...

- What does it mean to conquer?
 - to bring a new ruler...
 - our call is to bring a new ruler into the lives of people
 - to bring a new ruler into the society that those people comprise
 - to bring God's kingdom
- As the Lord's prayer puts it: Your kingdom come, your will be done...
- Invitation to mission, but to go beyond what we have known before, to be willing to engage on new territory, in new ways, in fresh dependence on God....

God's promise to Joshua

- Its at that point that God's promise burns bright from this chapter!
 - (sometimes its all we remember from this chapter!!)
- "I will be with you.... I will not drop you!" - literal rendering of end of v.5!!
 - (image: father throwing son into air...)
 - a father with his child, maybe at the chute in the play-park... "I won't drop you!"
 - I will be with you
- Full stop. End of story. That's it. No need for doubt or uncertainty, of this at least.
 - "I will be with you."
- And its on that basis - the basis of God's personal, powerful presence with Joshua, that he is encouraged and commanded to:
 - "Be strong and courageous - be strong and very courageous!" (v.6,7,9,18)
- He is to be strong, but:
 - not because he is able in himself;
 - not because his training of itself is enough for the task;
 - not because the people, fully armed and in their thousands, were able to conquer the land;
 - not because he is the appointed heir to the great, loved and respected Moses.
 - certainly not because he knew the new land into which they were heading - he'd never been there before!!
- None of those things were adequate for the task.
- Only God's presence made the task a possible one.
- Only His promise made Joshua's command of the people to pack up and get ready to advance anything other than madness
- For us, I hope stirred by God's call to enter a new land, to engage in fresh ways in mission, here in Fintry, connecting with the community around us in ways we've not considered before....
 - to bring a new ruler into the lives of people and situations, in Fintry, in our workplaces, in our home and family lives...
 - our only confidence to press forward is not the excitement of a challenge...
 - but the knowledge of God's presence with us

Conclusion

- So, two questions:
 - do you hear God's call to stir ourselves from our current experience to take a new land, to bring his rule into new places?
 - and as we hear that call, do we know the reality of God's promised presence?