

**Sermon Title: "The Courage To Be"**  
**Pastor Raphael Warnock**  
**5 February, 2023**

**Joshua 1:1-9**

*<sup>1</sup>After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, <sup>2</sup>"My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. <sup>4</sup>From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. <sup>5</sup>No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. <sup>6</sup>Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. <sup>7</sup>Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. <sup>9</sup>I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

**Sermon Summary:**

Joshua is most remembered as being the right hand of Moses. Along with Aaron, (Moses' brother), Joshua was most trusted by Moses during the mass *exodus* out of Egypt. When Moses died the Hebrews had not yet reached the Promised Land. So Joshua was named as Moses' successor to continue to; lead the people through the wilderness, conquer the lands that lie in the way of the Promised Land, and deliver the people into Israel. Those were big shoes to fill. Although we commemorate Moses for his obedience to God's voice in leading the people out of slavery, and for the many miracles they saw him perform with his staff- including the parting of the Red Sea - we cannot forget it was people like Joshua and Aaron who stood by Moses' side and supported him while he was trying to deliver God's law.

So, when Moses died and Joshua assumed the role as leader, Joshua was faced with the important and difficult task of continuing the journey through the wilderness. He was also responsible to be a military leader when the Hebrews faced various adversities along the way. But Joshua is not asked to "fill Moses' shoes." Joshua - though he was Moses' assistant - had his own set of gifts. What this passage reminds us is to have Courage to use the gifts that God has given us and to be the person God created us to be.

In order to have the courage to be, you need:

1. **CLARITY of Purpose** - We cannot allow ourselves to be distracted or discouraged by what God has called others to do. Someone else's shoes will always be uncomfortable when we try to fit them. However, when we know exactly what it is that we are supposed to do, when we understand how to use the particular gifts that God has endowed, and learn to "put on our own shoes," we then receive clarity on what it is God wants us to do.

2. **CONVINCED by the Promise** - Joshua 1:3 says "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses." In verse five the Lord continues with "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." To have courage is to believe that along the difficult journey you are set upon, God is still with you. Verse four gives an account of all the land that Joshua will conquer to make the territory which would become Israel. This is God's promise and Joshua holds on to this as he leads his army across the desert into victories such as over the city of Ai, or Jericho. After clarity, when God has promised you something, you must believe, have faith, and be convinced that what God has promised you will happen. The same God that was with Moses, Martin King Jr, and Momma, is the same God that is with us.

3. **CONFIDENT in GOD's Power** - The question still remains, "How do we find the Courage to be?" It takes courage to do all the awesome and miraculous things God has asked us to do. But where does that courage come from? It comes from God. When we focus on God, and "Only be strong and very courageous, *being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left*, so that you may be successful wherever you go." The title of today's sermon is inspired by Paul Tillich's 1952 publication "The Courage to Be," where he describes religion as an "ultimate concern." Consumed by technological distractions and economic prosperity, Tillich observed the modern American was left feeling empty and overwhelmed by a sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness. Tillich wrote, "the courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt." Placing God at the center of our life and focus instead of the other distractions and idols that cloud our clarity and fill us with false promises, is placing confidence in God's power in our life and in the world.

#### **Reflective Questions:**

1. Do you think you have a clear purpose? If not, what do you think is blocking that clarity?
2. In what ways do you feel convinced by God's promise? What promises have you recognized in your life?
3. As we enter into Black History Month, what ancestors (whether they be famous historical figures or members of your own family history) do you think have/had the same type of courage that Pastor Warnock was speaking about? Do you think you have the courage to do as they did in their day, what God might be asking you to do today?

4. What gives you confidence in God's power?