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**SERMON TITLE: Be Strong and Live Into the Promises of God**  
**SCRIPTURE: Joshua 1:1-11**  
**DATE: June 16, 2019**  
*Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

*Read also Hebrews 11:32-34*

In 1910 a young woman named Sonora Smart Dodd petitioned the Spokane Minister's Alliance to recognize fathers. Mother's Day had been started the year before. Her mother was deceased. Since her father had been both mother and father to her and her five siblings, she wanted to honor him. William Smart had been married twice—and widowed twice. People did not get divorced in those days, but widowhood was common. His first marriage produced five children. When he married his second wife, also a widow, she had three children. Then they had six children together. You do the math!

After the fact, after the kids are grown and launched into the world, it is easy to celebrate. It is easy to say what a great father Mr. Smart was. But, for him, when his second wife died and he had fourteen children and only himself, it probably looked like the most daunting task, the most impossible situation that he could imagine.

It probably seemed like trying to figure out a way to get across this river. Does your life feel like a tumultuous river; your problems bigger than you?

Life brings these challenges. Do you ever feel like the goals you have, the hopes you envision are as far away as being able to cross these troubled waters?

We are looking today at the hope of conquering the Promised Land. It had been years. In fact, the promise goes back to Abraham. To move into the promise was daunting for his descendants. *Was it really happening?* Let's hear the story. READ Joshua 1:1-11

Big changes were coming which would affect everyone—the leaders, the people, and the people in the land. God talked about the land and how much God was giving them. It said, 'including all the land of the Hittites.' Ancient Near East documents mention the Hittites. They were a nation that was as powerful as Egypt at that time. It was a known world power. God was saying "I have gifted this land to you." This was a huge gift, overcoming great obstacles, to give them prime property.

The language used in Hebrew clearly indicates a done deal.

The promise was sure. Are you confident in the sureness, the faithfulness, and the goodness of God? Do you have confidence in the power of God to act for you?

We read the Scripture about the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. Let's recall what they did.

By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received God's promises. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched fire, and escaped death. They became strong in battle *because the Lord was with them*.

That's what the Scripture reassures us. But when they first encountered God, they probably felt a little like the father with fourteen children and no wife (and no dishwasher and washer and dryer either.)

Where do you need to grow? What stormy river must you cross?

Let's look at the passage again. We are supposed to take this Word to heart. We are instructed to carefully obey and not deviate. That means when we are facing a huge obstacle.

Do you have any obstacles today?

Notice, not all of Scripture is a rule book. In fact, the majority of Scripture are stories about God's faithfulness and God's work through the lives of people who had many obstacles to overcome. These are people like our father who found himself responsible for raising fourteen children alone. That's quite a stormy river.

What's your stormy river in which you feel alone? I assure you—and this Word that you are not to deviate from has something to say. God is asking you this moment, no matter what, to stand in this Word of his.

When you cross your stormy waters with me, God says:

**God:**

I will be with you (2 times); I will not fail or abandon you;  
**I am giving** you the land (3 times)—

The verb tense means 'I would give them, I have given them, I am giving them. God's pretty much covering the gamut of a gift given.

Notice another detail: "The time has come."

Timing is very important to God. God does things on God's timeline.

How many impatient people do we have in this room? (No need to show your hands!) Nevertheless, when the time is right, notice . . .

*"wherever you go; no one able to stand against you."*

God gives success.

**The victory is already given.** But they have not lived into it yet. They have not taken possession.

#### People:

These people have had immense time of waiting. That is our least favorite word. Don't you know they wondered 'where is this going?' What's God's plan? Does God have a plan? Does God need a little help? This is a big river! This and this and this is the obstacle. – This person, this situation . . . that river gets wider and deeper.

But there is a bridge over troubled waters.

The time has come—**receive the gift.** How do we do it? Get ready, cross over, take possession; be strong and very courageous. . . .

You have a job to do, God said. You have to bring into this land my presence and my ways and you are going to do it by faith and in my power. It is a gift to you and to the world.

God knows us quite well. God has been dealing with folks like us for a long time so God adds:

*'Be careful to obey (2 times); do not deviate from Book; study it, meditate on it day and night.'*

Think of the people in the Bible whom you are meditating on. How did they handle hard times?

People find themselves in hard places sometimes. They find themselves in the midst of people who know nothing about God like we do, and it is your job to bless them. Even though your surroundings may be hard, there is no hard place or hard time in God's hands that is without purpose. No matter your circumstances, when put in God's hands they will be fruitful.

*Do not be afraid or discouraged!* Instead, you must get provisions ready and take possession.

One of my benedictions is, "You go no place by accident. Wherever you go God is sending you. Wherever you are, God has put you there. God has a purpose in your being there..."

The people in our story had to get ready to move out of the wilderness to fulfill the promise of Blessing.

Finally God says to the **Leaders:**

*'The time has come. Proceed, cross over. Be strong and courageous; trust God. Tell the people to get ready.'*

God leads the leader. God gives success to the leader.

Let's take this passage as regarding First Presbyterian Church in Duncanville. This past week I buried the 40<sup>th</sup> person from this congregation. That might be and is an obstacle to church health. Yet you look around and we still have about the same number of people because God has been with us, and you have welcomed people in. God wants this church to be here.

When you go outside, look at the immaculate lawn. Look at the men who showed up to sing today. God continues to do very fruitful things through this church. Yet is there an empty chair near you? God wants more! But YOU have to take possession of the gift. Are you proceeding to step out in faith and invite people in, reaching out to others to settle our little land of Duncanville for the Lord?

What steps are you taking?

Sonora Smart Dodd who wanted a Father's Day to recognize all fathers began her quest to see it happen at age 28. She committed herself and worked hard her entire life in the effort to honor fathers. It would be a long time, but it happened! It happened when she was 90 years old, when Richard Nixon signed it into law. In God's eyes, it is never too late.

In God's hands, you can do far more than you can ask or imagine! Do not deviate from this Word. Do not turn to the right or left; live into the power of God Almighty. Victory is God's gift to you.

Joshua says, "People get ready!"

AMEN