

Joshua 1:1-9

January 5, 2020

We started a new decade as we rang in the new year this last Wednesday. The 2010's are over (do we say '10s?) and the 20's begin (will they be roaring again?).

And it seems to be a time of uncertainty. Do you face this new decade with a sense of optimism or pessimism? A sense of excitement or fear? A sense of opportunity or concern?

Are you pessimistic or optimistic?

Fredrick Kempe

Gives six reasons for optimism when he writes,

"T'is the season to be gloomy, when the world's prognosticators provide their competing lists of the coming year's top risks. And there are plenty of candidates, from Iran to North Korea, and from American elections to global warming.

Acting on the advice of Winston Churchill, I'll instead close my year on a more hopeful note. "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty," Churchill famously said. He declared himself an optimist as "it does not seem to be much use to be anything else."

With that in mind, here are six sources of optimism for 2020—

Goes on to list things like: Global Poverty is down, Violent conflicts have declined, technology is in the rise—But not everyone is as optimistic as Mr. Kempe.

But some—many? Look forward to the next decade with a foreboding sense of fear. Some are afraid of—

AI

2020 Election

Recession

Climate Change

War

Ernest Becker, the Cultural Anthropologist from the last century described what many feel when he said,

"I think that taking life seriously means something such as this: that whatever man does on this planet has to be done in the lived truth of the terror of creation, of the grotesque, of the rumble of panic underneath everything. Otherwise it is false."

Are you optimistic or pessimistic?

What should a Christian be? What should we be here at Center Church?

Should we be optimistic or pessimistic?

The optimist looks at the world around and says—things will probably work out okay. We will be fine.

The pessimist looks at the world and says—things will not work out and there is no hope for any of us. We are doomed.

Which should we a Christian be? What should we be here at Center Church?

We don't first look at the world and all that is going on to inform our opinion, we first look at God's word. We look at the word of God and let the Lord inform and conform our perspectives according to his thoughts.

So we look to his book.

We are a people informed by this book.

We are a people instructed by this book.

We are a people guided by this book.

We are a people directed by this book.

We are a people lead by this book.

We are a people built by this book.

We are a people of this book.

And that is what I am going to seek to remind us all of today.

The people of the book KNOW God is with them because they mediate on his words.

Let the words of the book boom in our lives.

Let the book resound in our lives.

Let us not just read the Bible but read the Bible to know God.

In this new decade, we go to an old story in this old book to find new guidance for a new decade. We go back millennia to another nation that faced uncertain times at the death of the only leader two generations had known.

“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. 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. ⁵No 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. ⁶Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷Only 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. ⁸This 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. ⁹Have 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

PRAY

Uncertain Times

The Certain Word

1. Uncertain times

We aren’t the only ones who lived in uncertain times. Joshua records times like ours. A time that the book needed to resound in the land.

Moses was dead. Moses had led the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt to the very banks of the Jordan River, just on the cusp of the Promised Land. But for reasons of disobedience, he was not allowed by God to enter.

Moses' last words is essentially the entire book of Deuteronomy. At the end we read of his burial.

[5] So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, [6] and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. [7] Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. [8] And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, [11] none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, [12] and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. Deuteronomy 34:5–8, 9-12

Moses was unique. Joshua would lead the people but Joshua was no Moses. The people followed Joshua but it was clear that none was like Moses. He was mighty in power and now he was gone.

The vital element in Joshua's leadership would be the same as it was in the life of Moses.

"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.

God would be with him just as God was with Moses. Moses was not a success because he was naturally mighty in word and deed but because God was with him. Similarly, Joshua would not be a success because he was naturally mighty and impressive.

No. He promises to be with Joshua. I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. THEN he says.

⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them."

The order here is important. God does NOT tell Joshua, Be strong and courageous AND I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

What does that mean?

Joshua is able to be strong and courageous because God would be with him. And Moses before him was able to be strong and courageous because God was with HIM.

You might think—"Great, I'm happy for Joshua the son of Nun, but what does that have to do with me? Joshua was to lead the nation, I'm sure God was with him. What about me?"

A lot.

The writer to the Hebrews cites this section when he it in relation to money,

[5] Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." [6] So we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6

In other words, despite the uncertainties of our lives God promises, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

We can all relate to that. Our finances go up and we are confident, down and we are afraid. But Hebrews tells us that we can take the promise made to Joshua at the banks of the Jordan River and remind ourselves that he has already said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

In other words, your uncertainties cannot overtake you, because the Lord is with you. That is what he told Joshua and that is what he is saying to you today.

The Lord is with you!

Yahoo.
Wonderful.
Great news.
Woohoo.

Wait a second...

If God is with me—where is he?

Anyone ever wonder that? I do.

Most of the time in my life it doesn't FEEL LIKE is with me. Right? Or you might say, It doesn't seem like God is with me. It seems like I am alone and fighting for myself by myself.

One the one hand, we know the promise that God is with us but so often we can feel so utterly alone. Especially in times of suffering and hardship. Especially in times of uncertainty and confusion.

How can I know God is with me?

Good question. And that takes us to the second point. God promises to be with Joshua and his people in all times even the uncertain times.

2. The Certain Word

How can you know God is with you?

Look at verse 8,

⁸This 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.

Do you see how?

You can know God is with you when you have God's words constantly on your mouth and meditating it, 'day and night.' We can feel God is with us when we take his word with us wherever we go.

That's what he means to keep it on our lips and meditation on it day and night. It makes perfect sense. We can feel God is with us when we speak God's word and meditate on his word.

It makes perfect sense.

Let's imagine you are at home and you doze off on the couch for a while and awake to complete stillness. You throw your feet to the ground and wonder if anyone is around. To find out, you say, "Anyone here?"

And a voice from the next room says, "Yeah! What's up, I'm here!"

And then you know you are not alone.

That is how the word of God is to function for you. Sometimes you can find yourself in a life situation where you feel complete stillness and you wonder if anyone is around.

You say, "Anyone here?"

God says, "Yeah! What's up, I'm here."

That means you need to find those parts of the Bible that you should put in your mouth and meditate on.

Meditate does not mean empty your mind to relax. Eastern religions and philosophies have redefined the word meditation. Their goal is to empty the mind and think about nothing as a means of comfort. Christian meditation is the opposite. Instead of emptying our minds, Christian meditation means we are to fill it with God's word.

Meditation means fill your mind with a piece of the word of God and chew. And consider. And think. And think some more. And start a conversation with God.

I'll give you an example of what I do.

But I can tell you I am so slow to realize I need to mediate on God's word and not my own ideas. I can think about a problem over and over from all different angles and forget that his word.

I think of mediation like a conversation. The word is him speaking and then I think about what he has said and I talk back.

Here's what I *try* to do.

Psalm 16.

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Preserve me: I cannot protect or preserve myself. I am utterly dependent on your protection for security. Lead me away from the temptation that I can order my life in such a way as to think I can protect myself. I can't Lead me also away from temptation and away from the evil one.

You and you only preserve me. There is no power that can shake me from your loving protection.

You preserve me but also I must take refuge in you. I must move to you to take refuge in you. I must passively be waiting to feel like moving toward you. I must be constantly moving toward you for refuge. May I not take refuge in financial security, personal reputation, or family peace. Help me NOT to take refuge in what others think about me or how I feel at the moment.

Give me the strength to constantly move toward you and you only can protect me.

I say to the LORD, "You are my lord; I have no good apart from you."

You are my Lord. I need to say this out loud sometimes because I forget so easily. It can seem that you don't see me and all that I am going through but that is not true. You are my lord.

Sometimes my mind can go in a thousand different direction so I need to say out loud to remind and reset my brain, "You are my lord..." It can seem like you are far away but you are my lord. I can talk to my lord and I am always welcome, he will never send me away.

I also need to say out loud, "I have no good apart from you." None. Zero. All good things I have received or will receive comes directly from you to me. I cannot manufacture good things for myself. Further, without you I can do nothing much less attain something good apart from you.

Other things around me can seem better than you, but they are not. I can only build my life on you.

As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.

Thank you for all the saints in my life. They are the excellent ones. They might not have fame be widely known but they are the excellent ones. Thank you for those that pray for me consistently like Shawn and Jennifer McGraw and Seth Geesling. Help me not to be so foolish as to think that I can go my own way by myself without others.

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.

Lord, I don't sit in judgment of anyone. Far be it from me. But I know that it is only by your grace that I don't run after other gods. Help me to be a light to the sorrowful in my life. Let me be a light to those who are running after other gods and may I have opportunity to be a light to people like Steven, Kelcie, Jaden, Casey, James and Harriet.

Help me to take refuge in you and not run after the god of Money, Career, reputation, health, family or legacy. Although that seems a way of happiness, my sorrow would only multiply. I say again to the Lord, you are my Lord I have no good apart from you. I would rather be no where else.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.

Help me to remember the only place I can find contentment is in the middle of your will for me. Forgive me for all the times I think I know better than you. You are my chosen portion. Help me to remember that if I have nothing else but you I have everything.

You are the best. You provide for me in ways better than I could ever ask.

You hold my lot. You have a plan for my life and I am in your hands. I'm glad you hold my lot. If I were to hold my own lot, it would be a disaster. I am yours. And I am so glad. I need you more than I admit. Put the words of Jesus on my mind often, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?"

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

You have me where you want me. I may not always understand how the lines of my life are in pleasant places but you do. The experiences of my life are not random or happenstance. You have set the boundaries of my life and I am so very glad. May I have eyes to see your goodness to me.

Your purposes for me cannot be thwarted. Thank you that I have food, people in my life that I could call in the middle of the night if I needed help. Thank you for clothing, a roof over my head and transportation. Thank you that you have provided for me.

Even more, I have a beautiful inheritance awaiting. You are keeping it from me away from moth and rust. May I live each day thinking of the fact that the day will come when I will stand face to face with you.

Do you see?

Start a conversation and keep it going throughout the day. That is what it means to have the Bible not depart from your mouth.

When you meditate you will know God is with you.

Some of you might be asking—what about the success promised here in verse 8?

Did you notice?

⁸This 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.

Success here does NOT entail financial success but success in what really matters—godliness.

So we look to his book.

We are a people informed by this book.

We are a people instructed by this book.

We are a people guided by this book.

We are a people directed by this book.

We are a people lead by this book.

We are a people built by this book.

We are a people of this book.

How can the word of the Lord resound in our lives?

1. Get to know God in 2020 by getting to know his word

The Word of God is NOT God but you do know God by his word. Get to know him by reading his word.

2. Get to know God in 2020 by putting his word on your lips

3. Meditate in 2020 so God won't feel distant

4. Redefine success in 2020.