

New Obedience and New Comfort.

Joshua 8:1-2.

Sunday evening, January 24, 2010.

I. The Lord draws near.

“Now the Lord said to Joshua...”

A. How hard it can be for the Lord’s people to draw near to the Lord, especially when we have found ourselves under the chastening hand of the Lord as of late, as was the case with Joshua and his people.

1. We can feel so unworthy, like the publican who did not dare lift up his eyes to heaven.
2. Because of the pollution of guilt that still clings to our consciences and separates us from fellowship with the Lord.
3. Because of fear stemming from the sense that we deserve more by way of judgment because of our wayward hearts.
4. Because of doubt whether we really have been forgiven; whether the Lord really loves us; maybe we are only hypocrites.

B. In the middle of their hour of darkness; of doubt and of uncertainty the Lord draws near to them with words of new comfort and assurance.

“Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed...”

1. The people followed the Lord with a new humility and obedience.
 - They had sanctified themselves to the Lord 7:13.
 - They had, in a manner of speaking, each man searched his tent, and with self examination he appeared before the Lord the next morning.
 - They had put away the evil out of their midst in taking Achan and his family together with all their possessions outside the camp where they were stoned and burned. Joshua 7:24-26.
2. Having done so they are left with the question whether it would be enough. Would the Lord accept them once again? Or would He retain His anger towards them a while longer?
With these questions no doubt lingering in their hearts the Lord takes the initiative saying to them: “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed.”
3. The Lord is enormously tenderhearted toward those who seek Him out with a humble heart and a sense of their own unworthiness.
4. Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus spoken to us in the beatitudes. In Matt. 5.
 - “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”
No doubt the nation of Israel and Joshua their leader had a whole new sense of humility and unworthiness about them after their defeat at Ai, and the discovery of Achan’s sin.
 - “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”
What a sense of failure and sadness must have been theirs when they looked at the 36 young widows in their midst and those fatherless children. And when they looked at that empty spot that Achan and his family left behind in their midst.
 - “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”
A whole new docile spirit, and a willingness to do the will of the Lord from

the heart, marked them at this time.

- “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

A whole new desire to be rightly related to the Lord, and to follow Him must have marked them at this time.

- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

A new devotion to the Lord, and a new desire after Him was theirs, and it was theirs with singleness of heart and purpose; this was what they were after.

5. In such a state the heart of the Lord is like the heart of Joseph when his brothers come before him some decades after they had sold him. He tests their hearts so as to know the state of their hearts, and seeing a new softness and humility the Scripture says that “his heart yearned for them.” Genesis 42:24 and 43:29-31 and 45:1,2.

II. The Lord draws near with new blessings.

- A. “Take all the people of war and go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as spoil for yourselves.”
- B. With a whole new obedience in their hearts they go up against Ai as they had done with Jericho. Now that their hearts purposefully belong to the Lord, and not to the riches of the land, the Lord entrusts them with those riches as well. The spoils of Ai will go to the people; to all the people, for all are to go up against the city.
- C. No doubt the people must have sensed something of a holy awe that the Lord shared with them the spoils of war.
 1. Jericho taught them that all things first and foremost belong to the Lord.
 2. Achan had confirmed that understanding.
 3. Now they would learn one more thing; the Lord is not stingy, but He shares His abundance with His covenant people as long as their hearts are towards Him. That is why we ought to be a thankful people.
- D. Achan, who seized upon the spoil of Jericho, lost what he had taken illegally. He also lost his life and family, and he lost his inheritance in the land of promise.
- E. But those who acted with restraint, and waited on the Lord for His reward, they were rewarded soon enough, and richly so. They, whose hearts did not first and foremost belonged to those riches, but first and foremost to the Lord, found that the Lord was not stingy, but that He possessed a most liberal spirit.
 1. They inherited the Lord first.
 2. Secondly they inherited earthly riches also.
 3. Thirdly they inherited a place in the promised land for themselves and their children.
- F. In God’s kingdom no man will ever lose by practicing self-denial. Do you believe that?