

Sunday 10 January 2016
Otumoetai Baptist Church
Joshua 24

A Courageous Life to a Valiant Ending

(BLACK)

One thing you may or may not know about me is that I love movies. I mean, like a lot. Growing up I watched lots of movies – you could even say that they were one of my baby sitters.

I love a good story with good acting and a good message. I can't tell you exactly how many movies I've watched in my life time but it's well up there. And I'm a bit OCD with this in terms of remembering actors names, movie titles and directors etcetera. In fact this year I am even keeping a record of not only how many movies I watch in the year, but a list of all of them too.

I know, OCD right?

Well, Roxy my wife likes movies, but she doesn't love them like I do. Usually I'm the one that pushes for us to watch one. Or rent one out. Anyone else still do that? Okay, good.

So Roxy loves a good story too. But there is one thing we differ in

when it comes to movies and that is the way they end.

(SLIDE 1)

See, I am pretty happy to sit through a movie and the screenwriter leaves the ending open. You don't quite know what is going to happen to the characters, and that's where your imagination comes into it and you decide their fate.

Whereas for Roxy there is nothing worse! She wants all the loose ends tied up, all the characters relationships back together, and for there to be a 'Happily ever after'. In fact if we're watching a rom-com (That's romantic comedy for those wondering) and the two people don't end up together at the end, she'll be extremely disappointed.

But for me, I know that this is how life goes some times and people don't always get the happy ending. I like the realistic tone of these kinds of endings.

It's like they start off with a new beginning. A character or characters who prove to be heroic. A cracking story. And a fitting ending.

That's the formula for many movies these days. And as I was thinking about this message I've come to the belief that it's the same for many people's lives in the Bible.

If you think of Noah, his new beginning was the massive task of building a boat.

(SLIDE 2)

But not just any boat, an ark! I mean, this thing was huge! He proves his courage and survives the world's first natural disaster. He is blessed by God and made a new covenant with for God to bless his descendants.

Or take Abraham, his new beginning was leaving his father's home and stepping out of everything familiar to him.

(SLIDE 3)

God promised him that his descendants will make a great nation and all the earth will be blessed by them. Throughout his life Abraham showed courage and faith and in his twilight years he is blessed with the promised son Isaac. Abraham proves his courage in heeding God's voice even when it could cost him his own son. Abraham dies a hero at the ripe old age of 175.

Then there's Joseph who started off as a bit of an egotistical farm boy.

(SLIDE 4)

His new beginning was being sold into slavery. God is with him and gives him the ability to interpret dreams. Joseph goes from prisoner to prime minister and basically saves Egypt from a severe famine that cripples the land. Joseph shows courage in

confronting his family, after having learnt a few lessons along the way and he patches things up between them. Joseph says to them that what they meant for harm, God turned into good. Joseph saves the nation and dies at 110, having been faithful and courageous to the Lord.

Then there's old Moses.

(SLIDE 5)

An Egyptian prince! His new beginning was the wilderness! Where he wandered for 40 years. Then God revealed Himself to Moses, charged him with freeing his people Israel from the Egyptians. Eventually Moses shows great courage and fortitude in getting the task done and is known as a friend of God. How would you like to be known as a friend of Gods? Today he is one of the most famous and iconic people in Christian history. His fitting ending was seeing the Promised Land and then passing the baton of leadership onto his assistant Joshua.

(SLIDE 6)

Last Sunday we embarked on the new beginning of young Joshua. I say young, but when his new beginning came he was 60 years old.

Joshua followed in Moses' footsteps. He was taking the baton of leading the Israelites from a man who was a great leader and who God spoke to face to face.

That's some pressure right there.

But you might remember from last week that God knew what Joshua was feeling and the first thing He did was reassure him that the baton had been passed to the right guy. Then he told him to be strong and courageous. That God had a plan, a plan to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, and that Joshua had a big part to play in it.

(SLIDE 7)

God's call to Joshua was to live courageously, without fear, knowing that the Lord is with him at all times.

And that's where things finished up for us last week. With a new leader in Joshua and a new vision for the people of God.

Today we want to zero in on Joshua's life. We will see that he did indeed live a bold and courageous life. That his story is one of greatness and faithfulness. And that he had a fitting ending. In fact I'm calling it a valiant ending.

But before we get to the end, let's go through a summary of his life after receiving the call from God to lead His people into the Promised Land. Let's see how Joshua goes from a new beginning to a courageous life to a valiant ending.

So after being commissioned by God to lead the Israelites, Joshua rallies the troops and tells them that they will be crossing over to the Jordan, the land which God had promised them through their forefathers. Israel crosses the Jordan and makes it into the Promised Land. This is an amazing story of God miraculously drying up the sea so they could cross over it unharmed. Similar to God miraculously parting the Red Sea for the Israelites to leave Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

So they make it into the Promised Land.

(SLIDE 8)

And we read this in Joshua chapter 4 verses 19-24:

On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.'

(SLIDE 9)

For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea[b] when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God."

This becomes a pattern in the book and Joshua's life. The Lord uses him in helping the Israelites to victories, Joshua proves to be bold and courageous, and is quick to give all the credit to God. For it is by his might and power that they are being led. Joshua knows this.

The next step in his military campaign is the territory of Jericho.

(SLIDE 10)

This was a pivotal place in the Promised Land, which was surrounded by huge walls around the city. God speaks directly to Joshua and lays out the plan to him. I love that God lays out the plan. And the plan is to march around the city once for six days, and then on the seventh to march around it seven times, the priests then blow a trumpet, everyone shouts! And the walls will fall down flat.

What a plan! I mean if any human came up with that plan they would be laughed out of the commander position. But this is God we're talking about here. And if He can part seas, free people from their slavery and bring them into the Promised Land, well then some walls around a city are not much of a barrier for Him and His might really, are they?

Everything goes according to plan and the city of Jericho is captured.

At the end of chapter 6 we read "So the Lord was with Joshua and his fame spread throughout all the country."

This is the continuation of God's promise to Joshua that no enemy will be able to stand against him and that He promises to be with him wherever he goes.

The next part of Joshua's story is a bit of a speed bump, in that one of his men, Achan, takes some of the plundered goods for himself, even though they belong to God. As a result the Lord's anger burns against Israel and they lose their next minor battle. Joshua tears his clothes and inquires of the Lord, who tells him that Israel has sinned. Achan is found out and he and all his family, livestock and possessions are burned.

Pretty scary stuff. But that was the consequence of not being obedient to God back then ... what a relief we live in the New Testament of grace, huh!?

(SLIDE 11)

So Joshua carries on his winning battles after this and chapter 11 verses 16 through 23 provide an overview of his accomplishments:

So Joshua took this entire land: the hill country, all the Negev, the whole region of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah and

the mountains of Israel with their foothills, from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, to Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings and put them to death. Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. Except for the Hivites living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites, who took them all in battle. For it was the Lord himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

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At that time Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country: from Hebron, Debir and Anab, from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua totally destroyed them and their towns. No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive. So Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.

The next part of Joshua's life goes back to the promise from God that Israel will be given the Promised Land. So Joshua allots portions of the land to all the different tribes of Israel and the end of chapter 21 sums things up nicely here:

(SLIDE 13)

So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one (of them) was fulfilled.

Not one of their enemies withstood them.

Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed.

Just as Joshua and the Israelites could rely on God to keep His promises to them and watch over them, we can rely on God to keep His promises to us.

You know, I've always wanted to be a father.

(SLIDE 14)

That was one of my greatest desires growing up. To be able to bring children up, teach them right from wrong, play games with them, treasure them and love them.

Looking back over my life I believe this was something that God promised to me when I was younger.

See, I went through a long time of somewhat isolation and loneliness. I didn't know how I fit into this thing called life; I

didn't have many close friends; and my purpose in life was at a bit of a low point.

I wondered what I was going to do next. I remember that while I was studying at Uni in Hamilton, there was a night when I was walking the streets by myself and just feeling a bit undone by sad feelings and not knowing who I was. I remember crying out to anyone who would listen. Well I hoped someone would listen, anyway, and respond to me.

Even though I was raised going to church by my parents, I didn't really have a strong faith in anything outside myself. Sure there were times during my school years where I kind of believed in a God who I could know and could lead me, but nothing that really stuck for me, if you know what I mean.

Well, as I reflect on this night in Hamilton, I do believe that someone listened and responded. I think that God was saying to me, "Matt, you are mine. And you've always been mine. I've got a plan for you. A plan that involves having a family and feeling complete."

See, God knew my greatest desires. He knew that I wanted to be a husband and a father. He knew that I wanted something to belong to. He knew that I was desperate.

I cried out and he responded. His response was something I can hold onto as a promise. A promise that He has fulfilled.

Now it didn't happen straight away. There was still a journey for me to go on. And maybe you are sitting here today thinking "Well God has promised me something that hasn't happened yet. When's it going to happen for me?"

I can't answer that question, but I can tell you that when God promises something, He always delivers. Maybe not in our timing or in the way we expect Him to. But He always delivers. I've heard it put this way: "God is rarely early, but He is never late."

(SLIDE 15)

Think of the Israelites and how long they had to endure suffering in Egypt. And then how long they had to wander in the desert for. They had been promised that they were going to the Promised Land, but it took a long, long time for them to get there.

(SLIDE 16)

I can't help but think of my kids in the back of the car on those long trips, "Are we there yet, Dad? Are we there yet?"

Maybe some of the Israelites were like that too.

But they make it! And as any parent can tell you after a long trip, you can open up the doors and let the kids roam free!!!

Well, the Israelites were free. They had made it to the Promised land. Their enemies had been destroyed. And they were all given portions of the land to live in.

The Lord's promise to Israel and to Joshua had been fulfilled.

(SLIDE 17)

Remember in the very first chapter of Joshua, we read this:

No one will 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 never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left,

(SLIDE 18)

that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua was bold and courageous, and prosperous and successful in leading them, just as the Lord promised he would be.

He lived a courageous life.

And now we come to his fitting ending.

(SLIDE 19)

In chapter 23 verse 1 we read this:

After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man, summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials...

It was time for this courageous leader to give his farewell speech to his faithful followers. To remind them of what the Lord has done for them. To encourage them to be bold and courageous in their lives once he's gone. To continue to follow the Lord and trust in him.

In the final verses of chapter 23 Joshua says to them:

(SLIDE 20)

"Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. But just as all the good things the

Lord your God has promised you have come to you, so he will bring on you all the evil things he has threatened, until the Lord your God has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

There's a bit of a warning here to the Israelites. They know how good the Lord has been to them. They know that He has gone before them in their journey. They know that all His promises have been fulfilled. So if they now decide to turn astray from Him, the consequence is quite high.

They would have been thinking of poor Achan's decision to sin by keeping some of the plunder from Jericho, which the consequence was the Lord's anger burning against him and his entire family and livestock.

So the stakes are quite high here for Israel. And we know that they didn't always get it right after this either. From our series on the book of Judges that we went through last year we saw that the people of Israel took their eyes off the Lord and instead did what was right in their own eyes. And the Lord allowed them to go through that cycle of sin, slavery, shout, salvation.

They sinned by worshipping other gods; they were sold into slavery by other nations; they shouted to God to deliver them; and God raised up for them a judge to bring salvation back to them.

Joshua was a pre-judge for the Israelites. He gave his all for them. He showed tremendous courage in how he lived. And he was faithful to what the Lord called him to do in leading Israel into the Promised Land.

And he ended things well. He ended things as they begun for him with the Lord commanding him to be bold and courageous. He encouraged the Israelites to be bold and courageous.

And finally he challenged them. In the very last chapter of the book and his life, Joshua lays down the gauntlet for them in verses 14 and 15, you might be familiar with some of these words:

(SLIDE 21)

"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors

served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

Choose this day whom you will serve. What’s it going to be, Israel? The living God or the other gods your ancestors served?

It’s the same question asked of us today. Who are we going to choose this day to serve? The one true God or the gods of this world, like money, sex, power, materialism, our own desires?

(SLIDE 22)

Joshua says, “As far as I’m concerned, there’s no question here. For me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

(SLIDE 23)

Joshua had a new beginning, he lived a courageous life, he was faithful to the Lord until the very end and he challenged his followers to do the same. Joshua had a valiant ending. An ending that went beyond him, as we read in the last part of the book: *Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten ... Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.*

Endings speak to how we lived our lives. What mattered to us? How did we treat people around us? What were we passionate about? How did we live each day?

Some of you here might be thinking that you haven’t started too well and need to make some changes. You need a new beginning before you can reach that courageous life and valiant ending.

I want to show you a clip from a movie called ‘Courageous’. For those who haven’t heard of it, it’s about a group of five fathers who are wondering about what it means to live a courageous life and be the leader of their families.

One of the fathers goes through a terrible tragedy. And through this he realises that he’s been living the wrong way. He’s struggling with what it means to be a father. He wants to make changes. He wants a new beginning. A second shot at life.

Let’s watch the clip.

(SLIDE 24 – Video)

(Video Clip: Courageous: Ending Well)

(SLIDE 25)

Maybe you are sitting here today and you've had a new beginning, but things are not going quite as well now. Maybe you're stuck in a bit of a rut of some sort. Like the father in that clip.

Maybe you are sitting here today and you're living a courageous life but finding things tough. Things are not working out as you hoped they would. You're struggling.

Maybe you are sitting here today and you're heading to that valiant ending. You've seen and done a lot in your life. You've lived courageously, you've been faithful, and you've chosen each day whom you will serve.

No matter where you find yourself today, I hope that the life of Joshua and the faithfulness of God in keeping His promises to His people encourages you to live a courageous life. And to head towards that valiant ending.

Let's pray.

Order of Service – 10 January 2016

First Welcome

2 Songs - Indescribable – Chris Tomlin

One Thing Remains – Jesus Culture

Second Welcome

Notices and Photos from Brian and Gay

Offering

Song - Blessed Be Your Name – Matt Redman

Song - Grace Wins Every Time – Matthew West

Message

Song - In Christ Alone – Owl City

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