

Series: Joshua

When Faith Feels Impossible

Joshua 1:9

Sermon by Executive Pastor Billy Lloyd

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, July 26, 2026

A reading from Joshua 1:9: “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.” The word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Thanks, Lexi. All right. Good morning. How are you guys? Yeah. Hey, if you do not know me, I am Billy, one of the pastors here, and I am really excited to be with you today as we go into Joshua 1, the book of Joshua. As Lexi already read, the big theme of the beginning of the first chapter is this, be strong and courageous, and we are going to talk a lot about that today, but first I want you to turn to someone. I want you to ask them, when you think about being courageous, what is the most courageous thing you have ever seen? What do you think about when you think about being courageous? Will you tell that to each other this morning as we start? Just ten seconds. All right, any good ones? You want to yell them out? Any good ones? I didn't hear that. Somebody needs to yell. Say again? Getting married. I love it. Are there any more? Skydiving. What else? Military. Firefighting. That's good. When I think of courage, honestly, I was thinking about this. The thing that comes to my mind is the opening scene of Saving Private Ryan. Has anyone seen that movie? It is one of the most devastating. If people have been to war, they can't really watch that, and it is really hard, but it is very real, and that's what I think about is men who know that their lives are in severe danger, just stepping forth and going into the fire. That is what I think about courage.

I can't tell you a personal story about being courageous, but I can tell you a personal story about probably the least courageous thing that I have ever done. Can I tell you that story? Sarah and I, my wife Sarah and I were up in the Fraser area, the mountains, and we are not so much like hikers or campers, or we don't do a ton of mountain stuff. When we go on vacation, we like to go to the beach. That's our thing, but we were hiking through this little area of the river, and these really high willows and things were there, and we go around. Sarah is in front of me. It is a little trail. We go around this little bend, and actually, we are on a small group of trees. Some of our small group might remember this story, but we go around this little bend, and right there is the biggest moose I have ever seen in my life, like ten feet away, maybe five feet away, and so the moose is there. The moose is just chewing on stuff and glances at us, and I wish I could tell you what happened next, but I don't remember, because I turned and ran. Like, I'm not lying. I turned and ran and got back around to the turn and where they couldn't see the moose much. I turned around, and Sarah's nowhere. I mean, nowhere to be found. I mean, she's hanging out with the moose, and suddenly, like I go around and look, and she's like backing up from the moose. I'm like, “Sarah, it is not a mountain lion. It is not going to chase you. Like, you have to get away.” I mean, what do you do when you see a moose, right? I don't know. They never told me that in the wilderness stuff, but I ran. It is not my proudest day, but it did happen.

Courage is a funny thing. We're going to look at Joshua one today. As we heard last week, Paul preached. Who was here last week to hear Paul talk about all the buts, right? You got all that, but just a reminder of where we were. Last week was back before Joshua 1, and it is actually forty years before Joshua 1, and the generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt have come to the point of the promised land. This is the edge. This is the point in the story where something has to happen here, and they are on the edge of the promised land, and Moses, the leader, sends twelve spies into the promised land. Ten of them come back and they say, "You know what? The land is great, but there are giants in the land. We can't do it," and Joshua and Caleb come back, and they say, "Yes, there are giants in the land, but the Lord is with us." Remember this from last week? All the people of Israel say, "We don't really like what you guys are saying, Joshua and Caleb, so we're going to kill you," and they pick up stones, and they're going to stone them. Thankfully, they are saved. Ultimately, the nation of Israel rebels from the Lord and chooses not to walk into the promised land, and God says, "Okay, You guys are going to roam the desert, the wilderness for forty years, until all of the adults who left Egypt, all the adults who were about twenty years old and older when they left Egypt, except for Joshua and Caleb, when those guys die out, then you can go back and try to go to the promised land," and that's where we find ourselves today, forty years after that story. All of the adults who left Egypt who experienced or made that decision, they are gone now. Most of the adults are probably in their fifties and younger. Joshua and Caleb are probably seventy to eighty at this moment in time, but what I want you to know is that what seemed impossible forty years ago now seems more impossible.

Have you ever known a story to get smaller over the years? Have you ever known a fish that you caught to get smaller the more you tell the story about the fish? No. Stories tend to grow over time. Exaggeration comes along, and what was once like a hundred giants is now like ten-thousand giants. What was once like ten-foot walls maybe like forty-foot walls at this point. Things become more impossible and exaggerated. Stories grow, and this is where the children of Israel are. They have lived with these stories. They have heard it all, and now God is bringing them back to the same point that says, "Okay, this is the land that I've told you will inherit. Let's go," and that's where we find ourselves today. So, are you ready to go? All right.

There is a lot of scripture here today, so I'm going to read a lot. Follow along with me, but I want to set the context for where we are. So very first, now you have God speaking to Joshua starting in verse one of Joshua one: "After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' aide, 'Moses, my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I'm about to give to them,'" to the Israelites. "'I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon and from the great river, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country, to the Mediterranean Sea to the west. 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,'" and then continuing on, verse 7, we will hear it more. Again, "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, 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.” So, God is saying this over and over and over in the midst of this long message to Joshua, to be strong and courageous. It is one of the most common themes in the Bible. God tells his people throughout scripture different variations of this mandate. He says it all the time. “Do not fear.”

Let’s be honest. Fear is one of the driving forces for humanity, fear of death, fear of abandonment, fear of financial loss, fear of injury, fear of snakes. Any fear of snakes? Yeah, I’m very scared of snakes. Fear of bears, fear of spiders. What’s your biggest fear? Mine is obviously a moose. I don’t know. For the people of Israel, I think their biggest fear was probably the giants in the promised land. Maybe for Joshua, his biggest fear could have been the people gathering and wanting to stone him again for doing what God wanted him to do. We all have our fears, but God says over and over, “be strong and courageous.” So, we’re going to look deeper at that phrase, “be strong and courageous,” and discover a little bit more of what this meant in the context of the nation of Israel in that time.

So yeah, be strong and courageous. The first word is “strong.” In the Hebrew, this word is, it has that guttural thing in your throat you got to say for this. I don’t do it really well, but it is like a hazak type thing. What it means is to bind fast, to brace, to tighten, to take a firm grip, so when we think of strong, we think of really strong people. Like in my own self, I can stand to be strong. That is not exactly what hazak is saying, what it means in there. What it means is to grab onto. It is like the idea of this, of a ship or a boat in open water, and it has a strong chain or rope that tethers it to an anchor, and the anchor is tethered to the ground. It is the idea of our strength is not based on our own strength. Our strength is based on what we are tethered to, what we are holding onto. In this context, Joshua’s strength is based on his hold on the Lord, his hold on God.

Has anybody seen the new Toy Story, Toy Story Five? I don’t really have kids that age, but we went to see it. I thought it was a great movie. Does anybody remember Toy Story One? That’s a long time ago, like thirty years. There’s a scene where, who’s the bad kid next door? Sid, is that right? Yeah, so Sid has Woody, and he’s getting ready to do bad things or destroy Woody, and do you remember this? What does Woody say to him? He says, what? “Look behind you,” and Sid turns around, and remember all the misfit toys, misfits from next door? They’re all gathering together to come towards Sid. The context in that story is this. It is not in Woody’s strength that he’s courageous or strong. It really is in what Sid can’t see. It is behind him. It is not based on his own strength. It is based on the strength of the group. For us, it is not based on our own strength. It is based on the strength of the Lord.

So, what is the strength of the Lord? What is Joshua’s strength based upon? As we saw in the first part of this, the first thing I would say that Joshua’s strength is based upon is God’s promises. What has God promised the people of Israel and Joshua in this context? The first thing He promised them was land, the promised land, and we’re going to talk a lot more about this later, but He promised them the promised land. The second thing that He promised them was protection, protection against the enemies. None of the enemies in Canaan, they can’t stand against you. You will succeed, and the third thing that God promised Joshua in this context was what? His presence. “I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. My presence will be with you all the days of your life.” You heard that, but there was a qualifier. The qualifier. God’s word, Joshua 1, starting in verse 7. I want to read this again, and you can see the qualifier.

“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, 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.” God is asking Joshua to be obedient, obedient to the word of the God. So, if we can sum it up a little bit, it is like Joshua’s strength tethered to God is based on God’s promises and God’s word, and more pointedly, obeying and knowing and meditating and knowing what God says and knowing what God wants through his scripture and being obedient to God. We can’t just walk through, and let me qualify this for some of you who have not been in church very much. I’m not saying that following God is all about a list of rules, do this, and don’t do that, and then you will be right with God. I’m not saying that at all, but I am saying that God has some things that He feels are important for us to live a healthy life, and that is to stay away from sin, to stay away from the things that destroy. You heard Paul talk about this last week, that God is a forgiving God, but there are still consequences to the sin in our own life, and God is asking Joshua and his people to be obedient to the word, to stay in God’s presence. So that is what the strength is talking about. It is similar to what we see in Colossians 3:16 where it says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you.” Meditate on God’s word day and night. Know God’s word. It is part of the strength.

So, the second word, a word that we love, we want to be courageous, is the word “courageous.” In Hebrew, the word is “amatz,” and what it mean is this, to be alert, robust, physically solid, or to harden, so the idea in scripture is actually like a physical stance. It is like learning sports, and they have the athletic stance, knees bent, able to stand against what is coming. There is a physical piece to this courage. I mean, let’s be honest, it is literally the opposite of running from a moose. I mean, it is opposite. I t is not this.

Quick story. I faced a giant one time. I’m not kidding. I was a freshman in high school. Our team, football team was bad. We were a bad football team, I’m not going to lie, and I was a JV player. I played offensive tackle on JV, and Thursday morning, before we played our games on Friday night, Thursday afternoon we had JV games. So, Thursday morning, my head coach, I get a message, come to see your head coach, and he, Coach Miner, he calls me up and he’s like, “Billy,” he said, “I’m not letting you play JV today, because I need you for the game tomorrow, the varsity game. I’m like, “Oh, cool. I get to play varsity,” and one of our starting tackles, his grandmother had passed away, and so he had to miss the game. There was a backup tackle that was going to play, but then I was going to be like the backup. I was the backup. I thought, great, and then I found out that we were playing this team from West Georgia called Troup County High School, and it just so happens that they had the best defensive tackle in the state of Georgia playing on their team. His name was George Brewer, and I knew this because all week long, all week long our coaches were yelling at us like, “If we’re going to have any chance in this game, we’ve got to block George Brewer.” I forget his number, I think 98 or something. “We’ve got to block George Brewer if we’re going to have any success in this game.” I heard it all week long, and suddenly on Thursday, I find out that there’s a really good chance that I’m going to play against him. Now, this guy, I was about the size I am right now as a freshman in high school, about 6’1-ish, 200 pounds, 205, so I was a really small tackle, and George Brewer was 6’5, 275 pounds.

Let me put more context to it, late eighties. This is the late eighties. I mean, tackles in the NFL don’t weigh 275 in the late eighties. I mean, this guy was huge, and you think, okay, I figured it out. I was

like, maybe I'm exaggerating. Maybe after thirty-something years I remember this wrong, and I'm exaggerating, and this isn't right. So, I actually looked it up and had to work hard to look it up, and no, George Brewer was the Gatorade Player of the Year in the state of Georgia this year. He went and played at the University of Georgia the very next year, 6'5, 275, and so for two days, I'm like gearing up, getting ready. I have got to do this. I'm small, and I'm young, but I got some fight, and so I'm like, I got to do this, and thankfully, I did get in the game. I did play against them. Thankfully, by that time, the score was like 65 to 7 or something like that, and he took it easy on me. Here's the truth. The only touchdown we scored, the only thing we had in our team, we had the state champion hundred-meter track star at our school, and he was a bad football player, but he was really fast, and one of the ten kickoff returns that we took, he headed right up the middle, and nobody touched him, and we scored a touchdown. That's literally how we scored a touchdown, but my point is this, leading up to facing the giant was a lot harder than actually facing the giant. Yeah, he was big, he was strong, he didn't kill me, and I'm here today, but it is about courage, right? It is about courage, this idea of facing the giants.

So, here's the context of courage. If *Kazakh* is the internal decision to hold fast, if it is what we hold onto, holding onto Jesus, it really is *amatz*, standing strong, but we stand strong not on our own strength. We don't stand strong with the idea of fake it 'til you make it, or I am just going to pretend I'm strong until I am strong. That's not how this works in the Christian life. We are courageous. We can be courageous because of who it is we are holding onto. Be strong and courageous. In the Hebrew it is *Kazakh Va'amatz*. *Kazakh* secures the heart, *amatz* stabilizes the feet. We can stand strong in the face of uncertainty, not based on our own strength, but based on the word and promises of God.

There's another place where this phrase comes up, "be strong and courageous," and it actually happens at the end of this chapter. I have to tell you a little bit about this story, so to give us some context, I'll move along quickly here, but there are three, really two and a half tribes that are listed next, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and the story is quick. It is they came to Moses years ago, and they liked the land they were on. They were herders, they had a lot of cattle and flocks, and they liked the land outside of Canaan, and so they said, "Hey, Moses, can we use this land?" and Moses, it is a long story, but Moses says, "Yes, but when we go to take the promised land, your fighting men have to go with us and stay with us for as long as it takes to take the promised land, and then you can go home." Joshua goes to them and reminds them of this story. "Hey, remember, you get the land, but you got to go with us," and this Joshua one, starting at verse sixteen is their response to Joshua: "Whatever you have commanded us, we will do, and wherever you send us, we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death," and then they say this phrase back to Joshua, "Only be strong and courageous."

Now I knew that this phrase happened four times. I did not know that one of the times was not actually God speaking to Joshua. I found out later as I was reading through was this is actually the three tribes speaking it back to Joshua. "Be strong and courageous," and I think one of two things is happening here. Number one, Joshua is absolutely scared to death and walking around scared, and everybody is saying, "Hey dude, be strong. You are going to be okay," but I do not think that is it. I think is a community of people that remember what it meant to fear the impossible of going into the promised land, and I think

this is a community that is saying to each other, “Hey, we can do it. You be strong and courageous. I will be strong and courageous, and God is with us.” I think this is a community encouraging each other and showing each other that we are in this together. This is not in scripture. I want to be clear. This is not in scripture. This is just what I imagine was going on right here, but I think it is really cool, and wouldn’t it be nice if we were always in a community that did this to each other, that encouraged each other and loved each other and said, “Hey, there are giants in the land. Where we are going is hard, but the Lord is with us. Be strong and courageous.” That is the kind of community that I want to be in.

The other part of this story, I am going to move on a little bit here, is it is really an interesting part. I mentioned the three tribes, Reubenites, Gadites, the half tribe of Manasseh, and as Joshua is speaking to them, there are some themes that come up that are really, really important in this idea, and it happens through scripture a few different times based on this scene. It is the idea of the rest, the rest that the Lord gives us, the rest of the Lord. I just want to read this passage, and then we’ll come back and talk about it, and you’ll find out more about the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh. Starting in verse 12. Do we have all this, Kyle? We don’t, right? Sorry. I’m going to read a little bit of this, and then we’ll catch up because we didn’t get all this slide, but “To the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ‘Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you after he said, “The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land.”’” “The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land.” That phrase happens over and over in this story, and what Joshua is saying to those tribes, “and remember the Lord promised you, giving you this land, you will receive rest.” Then he goes on to say, “but you have to go with us, so that the rest of the tribes can experience our rest when we receive the promised land,” and the question is, what is meant by this word “rest”? Because it obviously at this point doesn’t mean that we get to stop working or we get to sit down and take a nap or that we don’t have to fight anymore, because there’s a lot of fighting left to happen after they have received their rest.

The word “rest” in this context is the word “nuach.” It means this, to settle down, abide, or dwell. God had promised them the land, the promised land, and then He said, “once you receive the promised land, you will receive rest,” and what He means by this is that when you live within the promises that I’ve given you, you will receive rest. This is not a rest of sitting down taking naps. Sometimes I love naps. I really love naps. This is not talking about that kind of rest. This is talking about the rest that comes when we live within the promises of God, and if we remain obedient to his word. It is the rest of our soul, when our soul is at rest. You know what I’m talking about.

Let me read this passage starting in verse. Where does it start, Kyle? Yeah. So, stop here really quickly. I’m sorry I got distracted on that verse, but then there’s a message that comes, because the rest does not last for the people of Israel. We know this over and over. The history of the Bible, the story of the Bible from then on out is really God’s people going through times of obedience, rest, living within God’s promises, to disobedience, to war, to rebuke, to losing. At some points they even go into exile, because God takes it all the way. That doesn’t sound like rest to me. What it sounds like is a temporary rest, which is what we will call it here, because they did not remain obedient to his word. They did not choose to live fully within the promises that God gave them, and the rest did not last.

How many of you know what I mean? You understand this, right? In our own lives, we go through times when we feel God’s presence. We know that He is with us. We feel very secure. We feel very

anchored. We feel very restful in our souls and spirits, and yet, for me, that rarely lasts. It rarely lasts, and this is what God is talking about in this, and the next place we see that is in Hebrews. So, the writer of Hebrews we think it is probably Paul, is writing, and he is talking about this idea of rest and Sabbath rest, and he is talking about this time with Joshua, and I just want to read it here. It is Hebrews chapter four, starting in verse eight: “For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.”

So what in the world are we talking about here? What he is saying is, yes, Joshua led the people to rest. God promised rest. He led the people to rest, but it did not last. If it was good enough, then God would not have spoken about what he called here another day. What does he mean by another day? That actually happens in Psalm 95. In Psalm 95, in talking about this passage, God is speaking to his people, and it says this, starting in verse 7: “Today, if only you would hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as you did at Meribah.” Meribah is the place where the prior generation rebelled. It is the place where they said, “No, we will not go into the promised land,” and in Psalm 95, God is saying this, “Today, if you would only hear his voice, do not harden your heart.” That later day, that later day that we talked about in Hebrews just now, is this idea of true rest.

So, what do we mean by the word “today”? Well, it actually means today. Right now, every day, every moment, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. The idea of the rest, the rest for our soul, is connected so closely to how we come before the Lord, how we enter into his presence, how we say, “Today, Lord, I need your help. Today, Lord, I come to you.” I believe it is a process, a daily process over and over. Scripture says, “His mercies are new every morning.” Why are they new every morning? Because we need his mercies every morning, and if we come to Him daily over and over and over into his presence, asking for his presence to be with us, that is where true rest comes from.

So today, what is the most courageous thing that you could do? We started with courage. We’ve ended with rest. What is the most courageous thing that you can do? I believe the most courageous thing that you can do is to let go, is to stop working so hard to earn the favor of our Lord Jesus Christ, to stop trying to get our lives in order first before we come to Him. God doesn’t fix broken people. God makes us brand new, and when we live in that truth of God’s newness, of God’s love, of God’s grace, then we stop the work. That is where true rest comes from, when we stop the work of trying to fix ourselves and trust completely in the promises and the word of God.

I want to ask you to stand up. We have been talking a lot about the Holy Spirit. I love it, the last few weeks about how the Holy Spirit works in us, the person and work of the Holy Spirit. It is his presence that goes with us. It is his presence that dwells with us. I have asked our team to sing this song, God Revival, and what I love about this song is simply this, is it acknowledges that it is all about God and his work, that our strength, our confidence, and our courage is dependent on the Lord. How do we know this? Because we have seen Him work. We know his word. We know his love for us. So, as we sing today, I invite you to pour your heart out to our God and trust Him. Let’s pray together.

God, we love you. God, we thank you. God, I pray that you would help us to understand and know your rest in us. God, I pray for our souls today, our hearts today. Lord, help us to be fully anchored in you,

to know your strength, to know your promise, to know your word, and God, when we face the things that we don't understand, when we face the impossible things in this world, God, would you give us the courage, true courage from you to stand strong even when we don't want to. Lord, it is all for you today, and we love you. In Jesus' name, amen. Let's sing together.

37:03 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

Message #963