**A New Season 6th October 2019**

**Intro**

I’ve mentioned a number of times over the last few weeks that we are entering a new stage in the life of the church. A new season.

God likes seasons!

I don’t think people like them so much because seasons means change.

& I think God likes seasons, because he uses them ….

- to develop us,

- to teach us new things

- but I think predominately God uses new seasons for us to get to know and experience a different aspect of His character.

e.g.

I can imagine Him taking great pleasure in leading us into a new season because He has so many aspects of His nature that He wants us to experience.

Q = Do you ever wonder why on earth God let you go through something?

You see, you’ll never know if God will show up to rescue you, if you never need rescuing.

Or

how will you know that he will provide for you, if you’re never moved out of your comfort zone or until the provision you’ve always relied on dries up?

You may know it in theory, but that wouldn’t be enough in difficult times.

You have to know that you know that God will provide for you and the only way for Him to get you to that place, maybe to dry up the other sources of provision you have!

Or

How will he ever get you to acknowledge something not good in your attitude that he wants you to repent of, unless he puts you in such uncomfortable circumstances that you can’t help but react?

Today I want to look at some things we can learn from how God did things differently with His people

when they were in the wilderness with Moses

v

compared to the new season when they were in the promised land with Joshua.

1. **God was shifting them from a place of security to having to have faith in action.**

When the people of Israel were being led through the wilderness by Moses,

God led them by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. How easy was that?

They had a great big unmistakable cloud to follow in the daytime and a burning pillar of fire at night!!!

Also how safe was that?

They could see the presence of God as a physical thing right in front of them and right behind them, they were hemmed in

The visible presence of God (cloud and pillar of fire) was Moses’ lead and rearguard - protecting their backs.

Whereas if we Read Joshua 3:1-4

Joshua tells the people to follow the ark of the covenant which is the presence of God when they see it going ahead of them into the Jordan river.

But!

- the instruction to the people was very clear - keep a distance of 2,000 cubits, that’s almost one kilometre between the front rank of people and the priests carrying the ark on their shoulders.

N.B.

At that distance, if something really bad happened to the priests en route to the river, the people would not know about it until it was too late and they themselves suffered the same disaster, one rank at a time!

– God was shifting them from security, to believing in him on the move

i.e. having faith in action.

I don’t know about you but I kind of think of crossing the Jordan like the crossing of the Red Sea but it was far more scary!

In the crossing of the Red Sea, Moses and the people watched God taking all night to dam up the waters so they could pass through in the morning on dry ground.

V

Whereas for Joshua, not only was the Jordan flowing, it was flowing strongly as it was flood season. They did not have the luxury or security of watching an overnight miracle to prepare the way ahead for them

Read Josh 3:7 – 8

* Standing in the middle of a huge river at the height of the flood season is very different to seeing God divide a sea and stack up the waters on two sides, and a path right through to dry land on the other side!

….Joshua had to know God would show up for Him like he did for Moses but the people had to know too & the only way they would know was if they experienced it.

Listen to this…..Read v 9 – 13

Read v 14 – 16 too.

Joshua piled up the 12 stones they took out of the Jordan river and said…

Read Josh 4: 21 – 24

That’s one of the reasons why last week was so important.

i.e. the power of your personal testimony or your story is worth more than gold.

**We need to acknowledge and remember what God has done amongst us!**

(He dried it up before **us,** until **we** had crossed over).

1. **God’s order in your life**

Now you’d think that Joshua and the people would just go from strength to strength following such an amazing miracle to enter into their new land.

But Joshua chapter 5 takes a completely different turn & confronts us with a whole new emphasis in possessing the land.

Before moving on to the business of subduing the land and making it their own, Joshua faces the problem that the nation’s men are not ready to do so.

Not because they weren’t strong enough or able enough but because they hadn’t been circumcised!

Their own fathers should have circumcised them when they were young, as God’s law expected, but they had not done so.

So they were a generation who

* didn’t know what it meant to be different by doing things God’s way
* and as a result, the ways of God wouldn’t be the norm in the society they would build

**i.e. things would be seriously out of order unless it was sorted out**

2 things we need to hear here from this example of the men being circumcised as soon as they entered the new season….

1. Setting things in order that are out of order in our lives makes us vulnerable and the timing always seems to be at its worst
2. God won’t compromise when it comes to establishing His order in our lives.

In this example He was

* sacrificing the element of surprise Joshua had & giving their enemies time to prepare their strategy.
* Incapacitating his own people for fourteen days as they heal.
* Willingly making them vulnerable to the enemy.

All because God knew he couldn’t let them move on until His order was established in their lives.

Over the next few weeks, ask God to show you anything that is out of His order in your life

* Are your relationships as God intended? Marriage, kids, enemies?
* Do the hours you work, allow you to do what God wants you to do or has that taken over?
* Are you submitted to the church leaders and behind the vision God has given us for the next stage?
* Are you living by God’s financial principles?

Setting things in order that are out of order in our lives makes us vulnerable and the timing always seems to be at its worst.

But God won’t compromise when it comes to establishing His order in our lives before allowing us to move on into the next season.

There are 2 more lessons that we can learn about living in a new season from this chapter.

Read Josh 5: 11-12

1. **How God has provided in the past will end and He will provide a new way of doing things for the task ahead.**

Immediately after the healing of the circumcision and before the first major step in possessing the Promised Land, the Israelites celebrate Passover and the very next day they get to taste the produce of the land that will be their home from now on.

The day after their first taste of the new food, the manna ends and the produce of the land becomes their supply going forward.

& it’s not just the resource that changes, but new thinking, new structures and strategies that are appropriate to the new season.

* No more regular, guaranteed, daily, familiar provision.
* Now they had to sow crops, tend animals, harvest, prepare & cook!

I felt quite a serious warning here.

1. If you don’t want to move forward into the new season, the manna will still be ending and if you dig your heels in, you’ll soon get malnourished!
2. The initial excitement of a new season can evaporate quickly, we have to adjust to the additional work and learning that a new way of doing things requires.

**Last lesson - grey areas**

Read Joshua 5: 13-15

Joshua is confronted by a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua’s natural response is to ask the man if he is on their side or that of their enemy. What he gets as a reply is totally unexpected. The man answers that he is on neither side, but he operates on a higher plane as he is the commander of the army of the Lord. All he has to say to Joshua is, take off your sandals as you are standing on holy ground.

This seems a really weird way to end the chapter and it bears no relevance to anything later on.

But what I get from this = sometimes things are not as clean cut as ‘for’ or ‘against.’

If we are to reach people with the gospel today we have to learn to navigate in the ‘neithers’ of this world.

We have to live by and find how the black and white of God’s word applies today in a world of increasing grey!

& it is also about living in a way that it is not a simple matter of for or against, but it is about

* serving a higher calling,
* living for a higher purpose and God’s Kingdom agenda.

Challenging stuff this morning but who would want to stay wandering in the wilderness when there’s a new promised land to settle in and occupy!