

This morning I am in the seventh week of a sermon series I am doing on the Old Testament book of Joshua, the sixth book of the Bible. If you're unfamiliar with this book of the Bible, the historical context is that the Israelites, who were enslaved in Egypt, have been set free by God, using a man named Moses, with the plan of bringing them to the land of Canaan, a land which God had promised to their ancestor Abraham 600 years earlier. After the Israelites wander in the wilderness for 40 years as a result of their disobedience, Joshua leads the Israelites across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. There are essentially three parts to Joshua – the preparation for the Promised Land, the conquest of the Promised Land, and the division of the Promised Land. Last week finished up the section on the conquest of the Promised Land. This week, we'll be in Joshua 13-15, a section which is part of the division of the Promised Land, looking specifically at the life of a man named Caleb. While this book may have been named after Joshua, Caleb deserves to be remembered as the only other person who 40 years prior had the faith to trust that God would give them the Promised Land.

Joshua 13 begins with these words:

When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the LORD said to him, "You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.

Joshua is then instructed to follow God in driving out the remaining people in the land, and then to divide the land of Canaan among the nine and ½ tribes of Israel that are in the land. Remember that 2 ½ of the tribes - the Reubenites, Gaddites, and half of Manasseh – asked to be given land on the other side of the Jordan River.

Unfortunately, however, as we have mentioned in earlier weeks, the Israelites did not finish the job of driving people out of the land, but instead left people in the land who would eventually be a snare to them, leading them to follow false gods.

¹³ But the Israelites did not drive out the people of Geshur and Maacah, so they continue to live among the Israelites to this day.

In Chapter 14, we read about Caleb:

⁶ Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. ⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the

*servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, ⁸ but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD **my God wholeheartedly.** ⁹ So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' ¹⁰ "Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! ¹¹ I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. ¹² Now give me this hill country that **the LORD promised me that day.** You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said." ¹³ Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. ¹⁴ So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly.*

Let's look today at Caleb's story and what it has to teach us about the life of faith.

1) Discipleship involves being faithful to God until our last breath

Caleb's story begins in Numbers 13. After the Israelites have been delivered from slavery in Egypt and brought to the edge of Canaan, Moses chooses a spy from each of the twelve tribes to check out the land that God has promised them. Among them is Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, from the tribe of Ephraim. Picking up the story in v. 21:

*²¹ So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath. ²² **They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, lived.** (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³ When they reached the Valley of Eshcol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the Valley of Eshcol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. ²⁵ At the end of forty days they returned from **exploring the land.** ²⁶ They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and*

very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and **along the Jordan.**" ³⁰ *Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."* ³¹ *But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are."* ³² *And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³ We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."*

Remember, God has promised to give them the land. But 10 of the 12 spies see the Anakites, some of the large inhabitants of the land and are so intimidated that they do not have faith that they can take the land. They look at their own size, and they look at the size of their enemy, but they do not look at God and His promises. They spread a fearful, negative report among the people, and everyone is afraid.

^{NIV} Numbers 14:1- That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. ² All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! ³ Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" ⁴ And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

Things are so bad that there is a mutiny. Because of the bad report, the Israelites want to get rid of Moses and go back to Egypt.

⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. ⁶ Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸ If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." ¹⁰ But the whole assembly talked about stoning them.

God meets with Moses and tells him that because of their unbelief, the whole generation will die in the desert.

²⁴ But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it... ³⁰ Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

Caleb is one of only two men, along with Joshua, who trusts that God will follow through on His promise, even in the face of great obstacles. But because of the unbelief of others, he is forced to wander with them in the desert for 40 years. And now, finally, 45 long years later, Caleb meets with Joshua and asks him to send him up to battle against the Anakites, the very men who frightened the Israelites and filled their hearts with unbelief so long ago.

So here I am today, eighty-five years old! ¹¹ I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. ¹² Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.

And God answers his request:

Joshua 15:13-14 - *In accordance with the LORD's command to him, Joshua gave to Caleb son of Jephunneh a portion in Judah-- Kiriath Arba, that is, Hebron. (Arba was the forefather of Anak.) ¹⁴ From Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites-- Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai-- descendants of Anak.*

Caleb is faithful to the end. He trusts God to complete what He began 45 years earlier, and what He promised 600 years earlier to Abraham. And at 85 years old, Caleb drives out the remaining Anakites, the very people who caused such fear in the original spies.

Discipleship involves being faithful to God until our very last breath. There is no retirement for the disciple of Christ. It doesn't matter how old you are, there is still work left to be done. You can call and encourage. You can pray. You can still share the gospel and point people to Christ as you trust Him in your final years. As disciples, we choose to serve God however He leads until the very end, living with Philippians 1:21-26 in our hearts and minds:

Philippians 1:21-26 - For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Lord, may this be true in your life. May this be the cry of your heart! May you give myself fully to Him until your dying day, so that you might say along with Paul:

2 Timothy 4:6-8 - For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

2) Discipleship is a wholehearted endeavor

Both the Numbers and Joshua passage emphasize the wholehearted nature of Caleb's discipleship:

²⁴ But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly

And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, ⁸ but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.

The heart in ancient Israel is not just the seat of emotions but the seat of the will. To be wholehearted is for your affection, your desire, and your will to be for God above anything and anyone else.

Matthew 5:8 - Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

To be pure in heart is to desire God above everything else. Throughout the passages on Caleb, two things are clear: he trusts God and His promise, and he wants to bring maximum glory to God. This story in Joshua 14 is not about Caleb's own glory or comfort. It's about a man who wants to show that God is still true to His Word to drive out the Anakites and give them the land that He promised to

them. Caleb wants to be a part of what God is doing, even if means waiting 45 years.

Consider three passages that bring out this wholehearted aspect of discipleship:

Philippians 3:7-14 - *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection **from the dead.** ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

A wholehearted desire to know Christ and be like Him.

1 Corinthians 15:58 - *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

A wholehearted devotion to do what He has called us to do.

1 Corinthians 10:31 - *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

A wholehearted desire to bring Him the maximum amount of glory through our lives. God, I want to bring you maximum glory through my work. Through my love life. Through my parenting. Through my relationships. Through my free time. I am wholehearted, wholly yours.

3) Discipleship involves fixing your eyes on Jesus

Throughout Caleb's life, he kept his eyes on God. In Numbers 13, when the twelve tribes were sent to spy out the land of Canaan, the eyes of ten spies were on the

size of the giants, but Caleb's eyes were not on the size of the enemies, but on the size of His God. Do you measure yourself against the giants or the giants against God?

Even though the unbelief of others caused him to have to wander in the wilderness for forty years, even then Caleb's eyes were not on the desert and the others who had cost him the promised land but on his God. He stayed faithful. Are your eyes on others who have wronged you, or on the suffering you are experiencing because of it? Or are your eyes on the God who works all things together for good and takes what others intended for evil and uses it for good?

And even though Joshua would become the leader of Israel and achieve greater fame and prominence than he would, evidently his eyes were not on Joshua. Caleb served God wholeheartedly in the way God called him to serve. Even if that meant being under the radar. Even if it meant not being the leader, or having a book named after him. Are your eyes on those who seem to be blessed more in this world than you are? Or are your eyes on the God who has a good plan for you?

And once he made it into the promised land, Caleb's eyes were not on his age. His eyes were still on his God and on His promises. He was ready to go and fight, even at age 85. Are your eyes on your age? On your health issues and limitations? Or are your eyes on the God who again and again uses those the world discards or sees as unimportant?

Throughout his life, Caleb's eyes were fixed on his God, and he stayed faithful to the end, through the highs and the lows. Not everyone experiences the fame and success of a Joshua. The reality is that some trust in God and experience great blessing. Some get a book of the Bible named after them. But some experience tremendous pain. And most experience a mix of both.

Hebrews 11:32-40 - *And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵ Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might **gain a better resurrection**. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. ³⁷ They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and*

goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. ³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

No matter what comes our way, the call is to be faithful to the end, wholehearted, with our eyes fixed on our God, bringing maximum glory to God through our lives.

Hebrews 12:1-3 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

It does not matter how old you are. God is faithful to the end, and calls us to fix our eyes on Him until our dying day, trusting that He will complete the good work that He has begun in us, living our lives to bring maximum glory to God.

In the end, we don't live wholeheartedly because of Caleb's example. First of all, Caleb must have had his moments of sin and doubt along the way. Secondly, if our hope is in our own righteousness and our own efforts, we will probably give up when we realize we can't live wholeheartedly for God. No, we who are Christians know that we are right with God not on the basis of our efforts but because there is one who lived wholeheartedly after God and then died for us, for our sins, for our failures to live wholeheartedly for God. We live wholeheartedly because Jesus gave His all, gave His life, for us, and we owe it all to Him. Because He endured the cross for the joy set before Him, which was restoring you to a right relationship with God. He was faithful to the end, and the only reasonable response is to give our all for His glory.

The story goes that when the 19th century Chicago pastor D.L. Moody was in England, he heard the evangelist Henry Varley say, "The world has yet to see what God can do through a man who is totally yielded to Him." Moody was captivated by these words and resolved, "By the Grace of God, I will be that man!" By the grace of God, may the same be true of us.

Amen.