

The People Prepare for War
Joshua 1:1-18
Sermon Outline

Introduction: We do not often think of the church as an army, but that is the metaphor of the church that dominates the whole book of Joshua. What sort of war are we in? Who are the combatants? How are we supposed to fight?

I) What sort of war are we in?

An all out war aimed at complete domination

A) The conquest of Canaan pictures this

1) The conquest of the land is to be total

v.11: ...go in to take possession

v. 3-5: Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon...No man shall be able to stand before you.

Matthew 28.18: All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go...

2) The obedience of the combatants is to be absolute

v. 7: Be careful to do according to all...

v. 16: All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go

Colossians 3.17: In whatever you do...do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus...

B) Meaning for us

1) Nothing in life is neutral. Nothing is uncontested.

2) 90% of the battle is attitude

16: All that you have commanded...wherever you send

II) Who are the combatants?

A) God and us together

v. 10-11

God's activity and ours

- Without God, no conquest: *...the land the Lord...is giving you*

Nevertheless...

Joshua commanded...'Prepare your provisions...You are to pass over and... take possession

Philippians 2.12-13: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Why does God integrate us so fully into his plan?

B) God and all of us

v. 12-15: To the Reubenites, '...all the men of valor...shall help them until...they also take possession.'

Meaning for us:

1) Individual

2) Corporate

3) Are we consumers or soldiers?

III) How do we fight?

The way our Joshua did (and does)?

By incarnation and, if necessary, suffering.

- We enter
- We subvert by love from within

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) We are fond of thinking of the church as family, but not always as an army. What does the army metaphor add to the family metaphor? What issues, if any, do you have with thinking of the church as an army?
- 2) God's plan to completely dispossess the Canaanites has echoes in Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 18:18-20. How is the command to possess Canaan like, and how is it unlike the Great Commission?
- 3) Reflect on the following: "Nothing in life—whether relationships, or careers, or institutions, or the arts, or academic disciplines, or life-style decisions—is neutral. Nothing is uncontested. Christ, the Second Joshua, means to possess absolutely everything." Do you believe this? Why? Why not? Why, even if you believe it, do you often hide certain parts of your life away?
- 4) Read vv. 10-11. God makes clear that he alone is the reason for Israel's victory. Nevertheless, he intends them to commit fully to fighting for the realization of God's plan. Note the parallel in Philippians 2:1-13. Why does God operate this way?
- 5) Read vv. 12-15. What special command did Joshua give to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh? Why? Imagine why compliance with Joshua's command might have been hard for these tribes?
- 6) Individualism is a powerful force in all of our lives, and it adversely impacts our approach to church. Reflect on 1 Corinthians 12 (esp. v.7) and 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. How do these texts challenge our tendency to practice our faith individualistically—both as individual people and as individual congregations? Identify ways in which (unlike the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) you are content to "camp out" in the land east of Jordan rather than to join arms with the rest of the church until the work is done.
- 7) The following words appear in EPC's vision statement. They seek to describe how we are supposed to wage the war into which the Second Joshua has called us. They seek to describe what it looks like fully to enter "Canaan" without being subverted by it. How well are you doing this? Pray for help to do it better.

We seek to emulate Jesus' modus operandi in our pattern of life and ministry. Jesus, lovingly committed to our healing, fully entered our experience while remaining faithful to his Father. Even so, we seek, lovingly committed to our world's healing, to enter genuinely and faithfully into the communities and workplaces where God has placed us, while also seeking to be faithful to Christ in those places. Such engagement meant suffering for Jesus, and we should not be surprised or disheartened if it means suffering for us. We choose to love NYC—its people and its institutions. We choose neither to stand aloof from the city nor to be swallowed up by its values where they are fallen. Instead we choose to be its friends—to feel its pains, to enjoy its glories, to pray for its peace, and to subvert it to the King by sacrificial love. We exist not to make ourselves a great church but to make New York a great city.