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**Be Strong and Courageous**  
**Joshua 1:9**  
**2.10.19**

As we begin to transition from a few weeks that we have been away from our study of the book of Ephesians, first let me give a shout out to Ray Meyer who stepped in and did an excellent job of preaching last week.

What a blessing we have here at the Community Church to have a couple of young men who are willing to step into the pulpit when asked.

We are going to start up our study in Ephesians next week but this morning I wanted to share a few things that I learned on our trip to Peru. Next week Chris, Tami and I will be sharing some pictures and some of the things we learned on our trip.

But for this week I wanted to share one of the times I saw God show up in Peru. I was asked to give a short message to a group of women and a few men if we could get them gathered. I was asked the night before if I wanted to and I was hesitant. First, because I like to pray about things before I make a decision.

Secondly because I am not normally a person who can preach off the cuff, without much preparation. I like to read, study, take notes and then spend several hours putting a sermon together. So for me to have a night and a morning to come up with something to share with a group of people in the middle of the amazon, well, it was well out of my comfort zone.

But in the evening, as I was praying about what God would have me do, there was a peace that yes, God wanted me to share a message. So I shared this with the rest of the team and then I spent the night in prayer and the next morning I knew exactly what it was that God wanted me to preach on.

As I prayed I considered how the people were living and what God wanted to say to them, my short message was on fear. Fear is an universal emotion that people feel all over the world. But in the Amazon, I felt like fear was something that they dealt with on a larger scale.

Even though the life expectancy in Peru is 73, along the Amazon river I sense that it is a lot less for I did not see very many adults who were in their 60s and 70s. The population of the villages we spent time in were about 500 in number and nearly 50% children.

I felt like the people there were fearful of where their next meal might come from. There are no refrigerators or way to preserve things from day to day so they eat what they can scrounge up in the way of vegetables, fruits, chicken and the fish they can catch.

I felt these individuals were fearful for their children and their future. The women were fearful due to the large alcohol problem with the men. Were they and their kids going to be taken care of. They were fearful of what happens when their kids grow up, what is next for them. They were fearful of growing old, with all of the health problems they could possibly face.

I felt like they were dealing with a lot of fears.

I wonder if things are much different for people here in the states. I wonder if things are much different for us. True, we don't have to worry about where our next meal comes from but that is not the only fears we face is it?

Like them we can fear for our kids and their kids. We can fear for our future, for our health, for growing old. For having babies and providing for our families. For our jobs and many, many other fears.

As I thought about this in Peru and now think about this for us I began looking in the Bible to see what God had to say about fear and I think I have spotted a number of truths I can share with you.

First of all let me tell you that the Lord has said in His word 169 times “do not fear.” Some of these times He was speaking to a specific person about a specific circumstance or trial they were facing but a lot of the times God was re-assuring His people that they had no need to fear because He was with them.

Let me share a couple of biblical cases where God was involved in the lives of His people.

### 1. Men who had no eyes to see that God was with them

The nation of Israel had been attacked by another country and the king of the other country knew that Elisha was a man of God and through Elisha God was protecting Israel. So it was his plan to kidnap Elisha, taking him out of play. This is where we find ourselves in this story.

Look with me. **2 Kings 6:14-17**, “(The King of Aram) sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. Now when the attendant of the man of God (Elisha) had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, ‘Alas, my master! What shall we do?’ so he answered, ‘Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

The Lord opened the servant's eyes to the fact that there were multitudes of warring angels at Elisha's disposal. All he had to do is to call on them and his deliverance was swift and sure and that is what he did.

You can also read about when Moses was preparing to take the people into the Promised Land, he sent in 12 spies to check it out. When they returned, 10 of the spies gave this report.

**Numbers 13:27,32b-33 “Thus they told him, and said, ‘We went into the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey. But...the land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. There also we saw the Nephilim (giants like Goliath)...and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.’”**

Even though they saw that the land God had promised them was great and prosperous, all they could see was the giants in the land. Like the servant of the Elisha their eyes were not open to the sure victory they had due to their relationship with the God of the universe.

Like these spies and the servant of Elisha, the disciples of Christ also showed this fear in the midst of a storm.

**Matthew 8:23-26, “When Jesus got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, ‘Save us, Lord; we are perishing!’ He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?’ Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.”**

The disciples did not have eyes to see who was in their boat did they? If they did they would have known they had no need to fear.

I do not have time this morning to go through all the times when God told the person or the nation of Israel, do not fear. It seems like almost in every circumstance, every event that was occurring, God spoke to the person or people and reassured them they need not fear.

Sometimes I wonder if this is where we find ourselves in life. Like the individuals we find in these stories. Our eyes are not always opened to the fact of what God will do for us. I wonder if many times in our lives we live in fear because all we see is giants in the land, storms raging around us and the army closing in.

But time and time again we need to hear the words from our Lord, reassuring us that we do not need to fear.

God wants to take you into the promised land of blessings. He will face and defeat the giants for you, He will calm the seas and He will provide a host of warring angels at your disposal.

One of the twelve men who went into the Promised Land was Joshua. There is a whole book written about his life and I recommend you read it. You will be encouraged as you see how God was with Him.

As Joshua was preparing to go into the Promised Land look at how God reassured him.

**Deuteronomy 3:22, “Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.’**

**Deuteronomy 31:8, “The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”**

**Joshua 1:9, “...Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

God added a few more statement besides do not fear didn't He?

Do not tremble or be dismayed. Have you ever been dismayed at what is swirling around you. Have you ever been to the point where you even tremble at thinking about what might occur?

Another statement God tells Joshua is to be strong and courageous. I like that statement. Be strong and courageous. Seven times throughout Deuteronomy and the book of Joshua we can read where God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous.

That is a good word for us as well. **So how can we become people of faith, how can we come to the place where we do not fear and where we are strong and courageous in the Lord?**

One of the other things I believe we can do to be strong and courageous in the Lord is to start

**3. Start small in our obedience in the Lord. God doesn't expect you to slay giants on your first day out or maybe even in your first years as a Christian.**

David didn't fight Goliath until after he developed an intimate relationship with God. We have an advantage over David though. David sought God on the hillside as he was tending sheep. He sought God in the stars in the sky, maybe in the local tabernacle or from the conversations and teachings he had from his family and friends.

Our advantage we have is we have the word of God which tells us God's great love and mercy.

In your pursuit of being strong and courageous and of slaying the giants in you life nothing can replace...

a. Begin with **intimacy** with God and His word

One of the things we know to be true is what God told Joshua in **Joshua 1:8**, “**This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.**”

Intimacy with God and His word is key isn't? It is not just about being obedient to a list of rules, it is about relationship and spending time with God and in His word helps created that great intimacy. It is in His word we hear him say...do not fear, be dismayed or tremble for I am fighting for you. We need to hear these assurances from our God on a regular basis.

The second thing I think is important is to

b. Look for ways to be **obedient** in the small things.

Back to David.

**1 Samuel 17:34-37** <sup>34</sup>But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup>I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup>Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup>The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

David did not slay the giant in his life until after he experienced intimacy with God and until he had victory over a lion and a bear. David drew strength and courage from these smaller victories so when he was ready to face the giant he was prepared. He was able to be strong and courageous.

What areas might you be fighting bears and lions? In your thought life? In your language? In some area of obedience? Maybe you perceive giants where there are none. There can be a lot of smaller things that God wants to come into your life so you can experience m fighting for you, so you can experiencing victory.

When I am struggling with lions or bears or even what I perceive as giants I have found it helpful to keep passages like Joshua 1:9 close at hand,

**Joshua 1:8, “...Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

If I was into tattoos it might even be good to have this tattooed along my arm as a constant reminder.

Through intimacy with God, intimacy with His word and by experiencing even small victories in your life, your eyes will be opened to the fact that the Lord your God is the one who is fighting for you and more you know this and experience it, the more you can come to the place where you are strong and courageous in the Lord in all your battles. Giants, bears or lions.

This is the place where you want to be isn't it? This is the place where God wants you to be.

Amen!