

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH YOUR MOMENTS?

In Joshua chapter one, after the death of Moses, we learn of Joshua, the servant of God appointed to lead the nation of Israel into the promised land. God tells Joshua about all the territory that will be given to the Israelites. He assures him that no one will be able to stand against him. God promises Joshua that he will never leave him or forsake. There are three explicit times in this chapter he commands Joshua to “be strong and courageous, do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”. Be strong and courageous.

God knew the obstacles that Joshua would face. He knew that although he was the God who brought the Israelites out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, although he was the same God who had destroyed Pharaoh and his mighty army and he would be the same God to never leave him; Joshua would still need to be encouraged to be strong and courageous for the days to come.

In these times of physical pandemic, we are also facing a pandemic of the heart and spirit in America. God has taken a tragic moment in time, in fact 8 minutes and 46 seconds of moments in time to call us to witness the tragic murder of a human being and at the same time, a challenge to a city, a nation, a world, in fact the human race to finally after over 400 years of oppression, racism, hatred and discrimination to finally hear the words of challenge to “be strong and courageous.”

There was a second command given to Joshua which is yet appropriate for this season of challenge both individually and corporately. “To obey all the laws that Moses had given and do not turn from it to the right or to the left.” Today, in this season, we have been challenged to examine the laws of humanity and not turn to the right or left to avoid obeying the first command to be strong and courageous in facing the enemy. In 8 minutes and 46 seconds we have been called, challenged and dared to face, expose and acknowledge this unseen and many times carefully disguised enemy called racism, which had it not been for a cell phone camera, would have once again escaped capture, **not** detection but capture.

Now in this moment of sorrow we are facing the opportunity and challenge to breathe truth and face the reality of racism and be agents of change since this 46-year-old man named George Floyd can no longer do so. We are called to take a deep breath into our conscious, take a deep breath into our perspectives and mindsets, take a deep breath and face this enemy head on expose the real ugliness and tragedy of being a person of color, especially a black man in an American society. We need to do what Joshua; the son of Nun did many times as he faced enemy after enemy. He turned to his God, he admitted his failures and fears, he looked to the only one who had the solutions to defeating the enemy at hand. He listened, trusted and acted in the will of Almighty God. You see, Joshua learned that if he trusted God, then God would answer sometimes in unorthodox ways. Perhaps like a sheriff in Flint, Michigan who was

perceived as the enemy, but instead laid his baton and riot gear down and faced the protesters as a man with a willing heart, rather than a man without a conscious.

What will you do with your many next 8 minutes and 46 moments of time? Will you make a decision to be strong and courageous? Strong enough to hold your anger, not your peace and let God direct your next step? Will you step out of your comfort zone when your next opportunity for real “unscripted” conversation presents itself? What will your new perception of a person that does not look like you be? Will you be strong enough to hold what you say until you listen to the words you **hear**? Will you be courageous enough to acknowledge that racism falls on all sides of the color line?

But most of all, will you begin to try to make a difference in the community where you served as steward to the care of those who have been assigned to your hands? Will you see the issues of their heart as well and before you judge them by the color of their skin? Will you make a difference in the community where you live by treating those who have been assigned by God to care for you, by treating them with the respect, care and kindness that God has entrusted you to be in the moments of your life in which you interact?

On May 25th, we all heard a challenge from Almighty God. A challenge to be strong and courageous. A challenge to expose, acknowledge and make a difference in all the 8 minutes and 46 moments of time after George Floyd stopped breathing. What have you done with those moments? Millions of people all around the world began to answer the command of God to Joshua. They began to actually be strong and courageous. Not only because he was a black man who didn't deserve to die the way that he did, but because no man of any color deserves to just exist in fear of living their last 8 minutes and 46 moments of life.

Dear God: Our question today in our time of silence is where do we go from here? What does real justice look like? How do we heal the scars of generations of racism? Most of will we see and hear the pathway to forgiveness? How do we go from here? How do we get beyond the sorrow of death and the fear of life to come? God, we acknowledge that you have used the death of an unknown beautiful black man, a father, a son, a brother, a friend and used his death as a rallying call to find a way to look at each other differently, humanly even lovingly.

*You are calling us to be Jesus Christ with skin on. A Christ who has no borders of love, no borders of kindness and respect. Most of all God, we acknowledge that we cannot be strong or courageous. We cannot face the challenges of tomorrow by retreating to yesterdays of racism and discrimination. We are challenged to expose but not to exploit the injustices of America. We cannot call for justice if we live and act in unjustifiable ways. Hear our cry oh Lord. For we believe your promise in 2Chronicles 7:14 – “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Lord help us stand and act on your promise, then we will live as you call us to live in the book of Micah, “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.” **Amen***