

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021**  
**Joshua 1:1-16**  
**Rev.Scott Burton**  
**Brightons Parish Church**

Let us take a moment to pray before we think about God's word:

Come Holy Spirit, have your own way. Change our hearts and minds to be more like Jesus.

Come Holy Spirit, shape us as the church of Jesus.

Come Holy Spirit with power and deep conviction.  
for we ask it in Jesus name, Amen.

As I said before our reading the opening portion of the book of Joshua finds the people of God at the beginning of a new chapter Moses has died and gone to be with the lord before his death he wrote down the law of God enabling Israel to know the ways of the lord so that the promises of God could be fulfilled with Moses departure a new chapter begins and in many ways it foreshadows what the disciples would experience with Jesus after the resurrection in Matthew chapter 28 we read this the Holy Spirit and teaching them to be everything I have commanded you and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age hopefully we remember from last week that when the angel came and spoke to the woman and then through the women to the disciples the instruction was that they were to go to galilee and there Jesus would meet them well here they are they've responded in faith and they meet with Jesus for sure for some there is doubt still but they all worship Jesus as the risen lord and into that doubt into this group of people Jesus speaks he begins a new chapter these two moments in the history of God's people echo one another and in doing so they show us what to pay attention to what to draw from the opening chapter of Joshua that it might speak into our day because we as followers of Jesus as members of his church we too are given the same commission as those early disciples so what are we to pay attention to well firstly we are to respond to God's word the lord says to Joshua now then you and all these people get ready to cross the Jordan river into the land I am about to give them I will give you every place where you set your foot now then get ready these words carry drive impetus in the original language their commands to be put into practice and similarly Jesus says go and make go and make again these words are weighty they are strong they are urgent calling us to be about this rather than put it off it's interesting that Joshua is also told that wherever they set their feet this will become home to them but here's the thing it will only become home if they set out if they get actively involved if they cross into the promised land

in both Joshua's time and in Jesus commission to the church God's people are called to respond to God's word because if we don't

then his calling and commission is not fulfilled as he intended and there's no plan b friends you and I here in the sanctuary and at home we are it it is through us that God intends for others to come into his family and into his kingdom just a few weeks ago I was reminding us of the drastic fall in church membership over the last 20 years a fall which it could be asked does it show our apathy to our commission or that we have become comfortable with our ineffectiveness and so once again I effectively ask you have you had enough of decline enough so that we do something about it that we

recognize that we all have a part to play and it must include some way somehow the sharing of our faith with today's generation because the people who seem to be coming to church staying at church getting involved with church are people who choose to identify as Christian who choose to follow Jesus but people don't reach that stage if they're not first hearing about the Christian faith and so they must hear it some way somehow

and so I ask you here and you at home do you hear the personal call to respond and own this commission to own it to say it is mine it is mine

Joshua was called to respond and to ensure that he would know how to put God's word into practice the lord says to him be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you do not turn to it from the right or to the left keep it always on your lips similarly Jesus says that part of raising up disciples is teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you not only are we called to respond to God's word we are called to know it to chew over and to do so in community

we are called to this because Jesus is not after people who know some nice stories or can recite some of his nice morals Jesus says that a disciple is someone who knows his lord's teaching and knows it well enough that they put it into practice

so I wonder friends what's the way that you are engaging with God's word maybe you're using the new testament reading plan or an app like Lectio365 or Pray as You Go maybe you use printed daily reading notes no matter your preference though if we are to be a people who confidently share our faith such that we raise up new disciples we need to know our faith and the scriptures that underpin it

Joshua was a man of God a person who knew God's word and put it into practice and so his next step is to speak to the leaders and to the people so that what the lord had commanded would be put into practice but what I find really striking here is what he says to the Reubenites Gaditzen halftribe of Manasseh he says your wives or children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan but all your fighting men ready for battle must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites you're to help them until the lord gives them rest as he has done for you and I find that remarkable because these tribes these fighting men are called to leave their security their safety leave what is precious to them and rest their lives in fact they've to go ahead of their fellow Israelites never mind tag along at the back where do you think you would prefer to be at the back not the front and I think for me this shows that God calls us to a way of life where we stand alongside one another a way of life where we cannot be indifferent to the welfare of one another now Jesus does not mention this explicitly at the time of the great commission but let's remember only ten days before he had taught them this command love one another as I have loved you so you must love one another by this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another

care for others to the point of sacrifice is meant to distinguish us we cannot claim to be following the teaching of Jesus and remain indifferent to one another so what could this

look like what could this look like well this summer there's an opportunity for us all it's my intention that from June to August there will be no Tuesday evening events and that's to give us time to connect and reconnect with one another however I'm conscious that because of COVID and because we're a medium-sized church it's easy for people to be overlooked or maybe even forgotten because we haven't seen them in over a year and so we need a vehicle to care for as many as possible and a vehicle which also allows as many as are willing to get involved and so this week you will be sent a letter via email or post and in that letter you will be asked whether you are willing for your name address and phone number to be shared with the other members of your pastoral grouping this would then allow each of us to get in contact or do a card and visit or send a card do something and over the summer hopefully reconnect as a church family and if you're not in a pastoral grouping then get in touch if you want to get involved because please note this only those who opt in will have their details shared and only those who opt in will receive details of others who have also opted in so if you don't opt in your details will not be shared so let's not worry but neither will you receive details and we're sharing this just now because hopefully as many of us will get involved as possible and it then just takes time to put that into place additionally I would like to encourage you to read a book that I've been reading it's Francis Chan's Letters to the Church and I'd like you to try and read it over June to August because that's less than one chapter a week I've been found in it both stimulating and easy to read much easier than the book I gave to the elders okay but it gets us into God's word chewing it over and understanding some of what it means to be the church you can of course order a copy for yourself but if you would find it helpful for us to order your copy then give it out simply on the reply slip with the letter let us know there's space to make that known to us okay friends if we respond I'm excited about what the summer could hold for us I reconnected church family who are chewing upon God's word and responding to it such that we are better enabled to fulfill the commission given to us but before the end there's one final thing one final thing ultimately it's not our unity or our obedience or our knowledge which will enable us to fulfill our commission it's that the Lord is with us for he says to Joshua as I was with Moses so I will be with you I will never leave you nor forsake you be strong and courageous do not be afraid for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go and similarly Jesus promises surely I am with you always to the very end of the age friends our calling is momentous sometimes risky surely self-sacrificing and humanly impossible but the Lord promises to be with us in the times of Joshua in the times of the early church and even still today as I said last week Jesus is leading us onward and so it is his presence his faithfulness that gives us true courage as well as the love and power to respond to his commission

and to be a people united and living out his command

I pray it may be so, Amen