



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7643 Huron River Drive

Dexter, MI 48130

734-426-8480

---

### ***A NEW WORD FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT. . .***

#### **“LET’S ROLL”**

Scripture: Joshua 1:1-9

by Pastor Steve Bringardner

Oct 3, 2004

### **READ SCRIPTURE**

Continuing our look into the OLD Testament for a NEW, fresh word from God. . .

<sup>1</sup>After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide:  
<sup>2</sup>"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup>Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea [Mediterranean] on the west. <sup>5</sup>No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

<sup>6</sup>"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. <sup>7</sup>Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

### **INTRODUCTION**

We all can remember the events of 9/11, when America suffered the most catastrophic attack in its history. Our country was caught off guard that day. Yet there were heroes who rose to the occasion and kept the day from being even more devastating than it was.

One of those heroes was TODD BEAMER, a 32 year old husband and father of two (with one on the way at the time). He helped lead a takeover by passengers on United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in Somerset County, PA. The plane was headed toward Washington D.C., and presumably was on course for the White House or the Capitol.

There were 3 hijackers armed with knives; one appeared to have a bomb tied to his midsection. Todd called an Airfone operator (Lisa Jefferson) to explain that he and some others were going to rush the terrorists. After praying, reciting the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm & the Lord's Prayer and asking her to call his family, Beamer dropped the phone. But the line was still open, and that's when the operator heard Todd Beamer say: "Are you guys ready? Let's roll".

Here was a young man who stepped in at just the right moment when someone was needed to take the lead and do something. Fearlessly, he galvanized the energies of those around him and led the way by taking the first steps.

In the passage we read, Israel was also at a critical point in her history. Moses had died. The people were still in the wilderness. . .they were desolate. They desperately needed someone to step into the “leadership vacuum”. They only needed to get over the JORDAN RIVER, not the REED SEA (a stream by comparison. But they needed someone to step in and get them going toward making their claim on the land God had long ago promised them.

That man was JOSHUA. God appointed Joshua to lead. . .to utter the command, “*Let’s roll!*”

**A.** This message is about leadership. Before you tune out—thinking that this is for those with “leadership capabilities” or those who lead large corporations or political parties—let me say that all of us are called upon from time to time to step up to the plate and take charge— be it in an interpersonal conflict, a family crisis, a parenting issue, a personal decision, or a needed lifestyle change.

**B.** This message is also for those with the gift of leadership that Paul talks about in Romans 12. There he is talking about the gifts that God has given to His church. One of those is the gift of leadership. And he says if leadership is the gift you can offer the church, then “*exercise it diligently*” [v. 8].

My guess is that some of you here this morning don’t know you have the gift or the calling to leadership, and so you’ve never thought of yourself in the role of a ministry leader, a team leader, a worship leader, a youth leader. . .or, if you are a youth, as a leader among your peers.

You’ve said: “*I’m too old. . .I’m too young.*” “*I’m not trained. . .or I’m trained in a different area.*” “*There are too many out there who are better qualified than me.*” “*I’ll help, but I don’t want the responsibility.*” “*Frankly, the challenge scares me.*”

My hope is that the Holy Spirit will work with each of us where we are at this morning and help us to recognize where we can exercise leadership (either in our individual lives OR the church, OR both) . . . build us up and prepare us for the challenge (because God is always getting us ready for “what’s next”). . .and use us to say in some arena, “*Let’s roll!*”

## JOSHUA 1 IS A MESSAGE TO INDIVIDUALS

Four times in these verses, Joshua is encouraged to be “*strong and courageous (or, bold)*”.

The opposite of being strong and bold is to be fearful and dismayed. In Deuteronomy 31:7-8, Moses had stood Joshua in front of all the people of Israel and said: “*Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them. . . And the LORD will go ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.*”

The word “*fear*” is a strong term. It means to be so terrified that we tremble. “*Dismayed*” speaks of brokenness. It’s a word that speaks of being whipped, shattered, demoralized, completely thwarted and frustrated.

If we allow ourselves to be backed into a corner like this, fear will immobilize and paralyze us. We will become unable to take the actions we know we need to take or make the decisions we know we need to make.

ILLUSTRATION: Fear is like a “roaring lion”. 1 Peter 5:8 warns: “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” The devil uses fear to defeat us. But let me tell you something I learned about lions: it’s not the loud ones you need to be afraid of! A “roaring lion” is an old lion whose teeth have fallen out. But it’s an old lion who can scare someone with his loud roar right into the waiting jaws of a young lion (who can do serious harm).

ILLUSTRATION: I well remember a woman I worked with at Brighton Hospital whose father wouldn’t participate in the Family Program. She so longed for his support, but was afraid to confront him and tell him she needed him to be there for her. So I told her to visualize all her fears as a loud, grizzly animal standing under the pay phone (where she would call her father). I told her to keep walking toward the phone with all the “roaring” going on (inside her head). . .put in the coins. . .and make the call. She did. Her father didn’t come, but she won a great victory that day.

When we are facing something that’s too big for us, we all need to know that God is going to be with us. When Israel went out to battle, Moses instructed the priest to come near and speak to them: “Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be faint-hearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you” [Deuteronomy 20:3-4].

God tells us to BE STRONG and BE COURAGEOUS. Here’s the GOOD NEWS this morning: We don’t have to do so in our own strength. As Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10, we are to “be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.” In His strength we can conquer—rather than be conquered by—life’s challenges.

So, what challenge are you facing today—in your work life, your home life, your personal life? What fears do you need to confront? What long-needed changes do you need to make, but have been afraid?

Sometimes we have to take leadership in our own lives before we can be in charge over others.

Leaders are not just BUSINESS EXECES who wield a lot of authority and control.

Leaders are not just in charge of something at CHURCH (although we’ll talk about that in a minute).

Leaders are SPOUSES who see what needs to happen in their families and see that it gets done. Leaders are KIDS at school who refuse to go along with the crowd, but take a stand for what they know is right.

Leaders are MEN & WOMEN who will not back down in the face of a difficult situation or difficult people.

They seem to know how to motivate. . .how to keep others fired up. They sense people’s needs; they know when to say “Let’s roll” and when to say “Let’s rest” or “Let’s hold off for awhile”.

If we are going to be successful leaders in whatever context God has placed us, there are two others things mentioned in Joshua, chapter 1:

- Not only are we to be strong & courageous in His might. . .
- But we are to obey everything He has commanded in His law. . .we are not to turn from it to the right or to the left (i.e.: hedge or cut corners). . .
- And we are to read & study God’s Word. . .meditate on it day and night. . .and not let it depart from our mouths (i.e.: know it so well that it is always right there when we need it—even if we don’t know the wording verbatim).

One of the most gratifying joys of my ministry here at DUMC over the past four years has been to watch a number of men (probably a dozen) step into their rightful role as spiritual leaders of their households. And their families have become stronger. [To the many here who wish that was happening in their households: Don't give up! Let's continue to pray that God will bring those husbands & fathers into vital relationship with himself. . .and then bring them into the church.]

## JOSHUA 1 IS A MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH

Four times in the text God repeats these words of encouragement to Joshua—“*be strong and courageous. . .for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go*”—the same words Moses had given him in Deuteronomy. Joshua had already walked with God for 70 years. He was not a novice. He had served alongside Moses (e.g.: as a field commander; he also went partway up the mountain when Moses received the Law.). He had observed everything God had done in delivering Israel from Egypt and providing for them in the wilderness.

It was time for Joshua to step up to the plate. . .to take over. Moses was dead. Joshua had learned everything he possibly could from him. Now he was placed in charge of leading more than 2,000,000 people into a strange new land and conquering it. It was his turn to give the order, “*Let's roll*”. What a challenge—even for a man of Joshua's caliber! Without God it might have been frightening. With God it would be a great adventure.

Just as God was with Joshua, He will be with us as we face our own challenge as a church.

What's the challenge? Outwardly, it may be to pay off our debt. . .construct a “connector”. . .add staff. At the core, our mission is (as it has always been) to “*go make disciples*”. That means discipling all who are within the sound of my voice so that together we might reach the unchurched 1000's with the life transforming message of new life in Christ. WHEW! That's going to take a lot of leadership!

I believe with all of my heart that God wants to use the local church—our local church—to help transform this world and usher some people into the next.

- GOVERNMENT can't. New legislation won't redeem us. It will only re-arrange the yard markers on the playing field of life. Legislators cannot change a human heart.
- BUSINESS can't do it. Companies can provide some badly needed jobs and stimulate the economy. But that doesn't change the human heart.
- EDUCATION can't do it. Teachers can help us learn useful knowledge about the world, and gain skills to help us in the workplace. But they can't change the human heart.
- PSYCHOLOGY comes closer, but can't do it. Self-help programs can offer effective methods of changing our behavior. But what can truly transform the human heart?

That can only be accomplished by the power of the resurrected Christ, whose love conquers sin AND wipes out shame AND heals wounds AND reconciles enemies AND patches broken dreams AND ultimately changes the world (one life at a time).

And the domain of that life transformation is the LOCAL CHURCH.

Our present and our future as a local church rests in the hands of our leaders (I'm not speaking here of “pastoral leaders”). I think of the leadership foundation this church has been built on over many years—the previous pastors, the dirty dozen, the saints who have gone on to heaven (many of whose funerals I have officiated at), those who have come and gone for various reasons. And where we go from here will be

determined in large part by how leaders rise to the surface (as cream does) and begin to “*lead with diligence*”.

The question this morning is—and I address it to all of us whether we are currently serving in a capacity or not: **Will those of you who have been entrusted with leadership gifts take your gifts seriously, develop them fully, and deploy them courageously so that the body of believers may work together to accomplish the mission God has set before us?**

I close with a quote from BILL HYBELS book *Courageous Leadership* (pp. 27-28):

*“People supernaturally gifted to lead must yield themselves fully to God. They must cast powerful, biblical, God-honoring visions. They must build effective, loving, clearly focused teams. They must fire up Christ followers to give their absolute best for God. And they must insist with pit-bull determination that:*

- *the Gospel be preached*
- *the lost be found*
- *the believers be discipled*
- *the poor be served*
- *the lonely be enfolded into community*
- *AND, that God gets the credit for it all”*            AMEN!!!

## BENEDICTION

May God make you *courageous* (to face whatever you must this week).

May he make you *dangerous* (to the kingdom of darkness).

Go now in the strength of His might, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.