

Now To Him Who Is Able

5 May 2024

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Good morning church — I am excited to share some important news today about our future home at Skyway Drive. But before I do that — I want to help us remember how God uses time to teach His people what it means to wait on Him, to trust in Him, and have eyes to see His hand at work in their lives and throughout history.

In the OT, the story of the Israelites being set free from slavery in Egypt, their 40 year journey through the wilderness, and their 7 years of conquering the land of Canaan is a fascinating story of God's faithfulness and power. Not one promise God made to them failed. Indeed, He delivered them through and to the land He promised them.

Their leader Joshua was born into slavery in Egypt — and for 40 years he lived in those bitter conditions. Once set free, he and along with the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, and at the young age of 80, he led the people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. But if you know the story, the promised land was still full of enemies and in the promised land, they faced many battles — there was much waiting and weakness, and even more faith required. God's people HAD to wait on HIM. After 7 years of conquering Canaan — Joshua was able to rest where he lived to the age of 110.

The book of Joshua has served as a reminder in the Bible — remember to remember. May I remind you of some things they had to learn along the way, because we need to learn these things too. Faith was required for them. Faith is required for us.

### **God Commissions Joshua**

**1** After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. **3** Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. **4** From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. **5** No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. **7** Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. **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 good success. <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:1-9).

Joshua had to remember what God said:

- God said – this is what I am giving you.
- God said - I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.
- Be strong and courageous. Do not depart from my Word. Mediate on it day and night.
- Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

The story unfolds – the Israelites are standing one side of the Jordan river – looking into the Promised Land. Joshua sends spies in to survey the land, to see their enemies and look at Jericho.

<sup>7</sup>The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. <sup>8</sup> And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’ (Jos 3:7–8)

<sup>12</sup> Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. <sup>13</sup> And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

<sup>14</sup> So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, <sup>15</sup> and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), <sup>16</sup> the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan. (Jos 3:12–17)

The priests had to step out in faith and into the water — and THEN the water stopped. These priests are standing on dry ground in the middle of the river until the all of the Israelites passed over the Jordan.

### Twelve Memorial Stones from the Jordan

**4** When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup> “Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, <sup>3</sup> and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’ ” <sup>4</sup> Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. <sup>5</sup> And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, <sup>6</sup> that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ <sup>7</sup> then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

(Jos 4:1–7)

When your children ask in time to come – what do these stones mean to you? Tell them what God has done – that they would know the hand of the Lord is mighty – that you may fear the Lord your God forever.

So the people cross the Jordan – they remember God’s faithfulness – then God reminds them... (Joshua 5)

<sup>2</sup> At that time the Lord said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time.” <sup>3</sup> So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. <sup>4</sup> And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised. <sup>6</sup> For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord; the Lord swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>7</sup> So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

<sup>8</sup> When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. <sup>9</sup> And the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have

rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. (Jos 5:2–9)

So a generation of men – now in the Promised Land – are marked in a most vulnerable way. Circumcision of adult males is not the best way, humanly speaking, to prepare men for battle. While they healed, the people of Israel celebrated Passover, remembering again God’s power to save, His power to rescue, and His promises to them. What happens next is fascinating...

### **The Commander of the Lord’s Army**

<sup>13</sup> When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” <sup>14</sup> And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” <sup>15</sup> And the commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

### **The Fall of Jericho**

**6** Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. <sup>3</sup> You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. <sup>4</sup> Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. <sup>5</sup> And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.”

(Jos 5:13–6:5)

<sup>6</sup> So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the Lord.” <sup>7</sup> And he said to the people, “Go forward. March around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord.”

<sup>8</sup> And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the Lord went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them. <sup>9</sup> The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets, and the rear guard was walking after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. <sup>10</sup> But Joshua commanded the people, “You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.” <sup>11</sup> So he caused the ark of the Lord to circle the city, going about it once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in

the camp. <sup>12</sup> Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. <sup>13</sup> And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord walked on, and they blew the trumpets continually. And the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the Lord, while the trumpets blew continually. <sup>14</sup> And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did for six days. (Jos 6:6–14)

Jericho was a significant city in Canaan – surrounded by an outer wall 40 feet tall and an inner wall 20 feet high – both walls were six feet thick. Imagine the faith required to walk around the walls of the city for six days.... Joshua HAD TO REMEMBER God's faithfulness!

<sup>15</sup> On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. <sup>16</sup> And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city. (Jos 6:15–16)

<sup>20</sup> So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. (Jos 6:20)

God did it. Just as promised! I share this story as a reminder of what we need to remember.

- The only reason the walls of Jericho fell down was because that was God's plan and God's power on display.
- The reason God marked a generation of Israelite men before a battle – is so that permanent and personal scarring on every man would serve as a reminder of their identity with God.
- The reason twelve stones were pulled from the river bed was so that when the next generation of children would ask "What happened here?" There would be a clear memorialized answer: The Hand of Our God Is Good. Fear the Lord.
- The priests had to take God at His word – and walk into the river – BEFORE the water would stop flowing upstream.
- Joshua – had to remember – that God promised him that he would never leave him or forsake him, and God clearly said to keep His Word on his heart and mind both day and night.

If you are new to Grace Auburn, on January 25 of 2024, we closed on our Skyway Drive property that will be our future home. We secured the building for \$9.5M with a combination of our giving and financing with a Christian private equity group that partners with our church planting network.

Since the purchase of 3325 Skyway Drive in January, our team of elders and construction professionals have been diligently working on the best plan to convert a warehouse and office building into our next home.

The process - from fundraising, rezoning requests, purchase, and now design for a renovation - has been one that we have kept before the church when relevant information is available. Today is one of those days.

Per our request, our architect has provided a master plan for a full conversion of the building – We asked the architect to design this building with all the potential for ministry we could imagine...from the parking lot and green spaces that would provide welcoming experiences, a lobby that could host fellowship gatherings and lingering between services, a simple and beautiful space for worship, offices for our staff, and enough space for kids, students, and our campus ministries to thrive.

It's important to understand that in dreaming of ALL the ministry potential this building has, we strategically created a Master Plan and knowing that cost, helps us understand and "zero in" on priorities for phased approaches, and some phases are more dramatic and require more flexibility than others.

**And all these wonderful things came with a price tag: \$8M. The total cost for the building and master plan of renovation is around \$17.5M.**

Our initial estimate of getting in the building was around \$13M, but that was before the renovation design, and before structural, mechanical, and electrical engineering teams could work with our architect to create the right space for Grace Auburn Church.

It's worth noting that if we had purchased land for new construction, this project would cost \$25M and likely take two years.

So now that we have a master plan from our architect and construction budget from our general contractor, we can see more clearly.

While our vision is clear – and the design is beautiful... We understand that a phased approach may be necessary.

With this in mind, our elder team began to envision what getting into the building would look like with a phased approach. If we took it all the way back to only that which is necessary to fully convert the warehouse into a full height worship space and leave all

other renovations to future phases of developing our long-term home, ***where would that land us?***

Round 2 of budgeting came back in just under \$5,000,000.

In October of this year, we will have \$3M in cash on hand for construction. This phased approach means we need an additional \$2M to begin construction.

**As we determine the best approach for how and when to move into Skyway this is where we are:**

**1. To open the worship center and move-in with least disruption we need \$2M to begin construction.**

**2. Bolder yet, can we give \$5M - to complete the full vision, in its entirety? \$2M to begin construction. \$5M to complete the master plan**

When we purchased the building, the elders and our members voting together on the purchase believed, and still do believe that Skyway Drive is our best next step as a church family. But I want to remind us why, this morning.

Grace Auburn exists for the city, campus and nations to know and love Jesus.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Lee County is home to 180,000 people. Auburn is home to roughly half of that number – having grown by almost 9% since the 2020 census. It's believed by most experts that 6/10 people in our community claim something other than Christian on their religious beliefs.

Of the 33k Auburn University students on campus, only 20% of them profess any meaningful connection to Jesus or his church. Roughly 27,000 lost, 18-23 year olds showing up in our city each Fall. More than 2500 international students, visiting scholars, and employees from over 100 nations participate in the Auburn experience every year. We have an amazing opportunity to tell the world about Jesus right here.

The number of people in this community who are far from Jesus continues to go up. Since 2020, over 4,000 new non-believers have moved to our community. Odds are you know some of them – they are in our neighborhoods, workplaces, schools and campus. 10,000 Lee county residents were born outside of the United States.

The Church is to shine bright and bear witness of the Gospel... that they might hear and that some might come to faith in Jesus.

In my own soul – when I think about Grace Auburn – I don't see a building, but a people. But when I think about the building – I see a legacy of faith. The legacy of a gospel centered church, with authentic community, and a heart for the city, campus, and nations.

The priests had to put their feet in the Jordan before they saw God stop the water. When we planted this church – we too had to put our feet in the water and wait to see what God could do – and wow, what He has done... is beautiful.

Skyway is one place where our twelve stones will rest – where when our children ask, “What happened here?” We can say – THIS is what God has done through our church community. We have loved Jesus, loved one another, and made room at the table for those who want to know Jesus.

When I think about the millions of dollars – I think about an army of recently circumcised men who are walking with a limp around a fortified city called Jericho. All they could do is walk in faith. All they could do was walk in obedience to the Lord. God has the resources. God has the power. He is our provider!

We are to walk faithfully – and keep walking faithfully.

If walking faithfully means three or four crowded services at 720 E Glenn until we have what we need, then walk faithfully we will. If some areas of our church ministries feel strained or crowded, then we will walk faithfully until we can do better in a bigger space. If some things we’d love to see happen need to wait, then we will walk faithfully until He provides.

Skyway isn’t the ultimate goal. Being a people, faithful to Jesus and one another is.

A beautiful building at Skyway isn’t the ultimate goal, but there are weddings and funerals in our future.

God is the one who grows His Church.

Having more seats is not the end goal... the goal is sending more people from those seats to make disciples, plant more churches, and reach the nations for the glory of God.

If through Grace Auburn, God is using us together to bear witness of Jesus – then let’s do that to the best of our ability as we honor him.

I want to say a clear thank you to those who have already sacrificially given. Thank you. I am with you.

Joyful generosity often co-exists with sacrifice.

For those who have yet to give – please prayerfully consider your response to this. We are asking for 100% participation in this.

In faith – I’m asking for God to provide what we need.

I want Him to provide in such a way, that we could say as a church “This is what God has done. It was by His power. It was for His glory.”



I want Him to work in my life – in such a way that I can say I was all in.

I want the same for you. That we, together, can see ourselves surrendered to Him, for Him – and that we can say, This is what God has done. Great is the Lord!

### **Prayer for Spiritual Strength**

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14–21)

So this is how we are going to pray today:

God - will you help us walk faithfully with You and with one another, as we patiently wait to see your power and your plans unfold before us.

God – will you provide what we need to get into Skyway. We are specifically asking you to provide the money we need for the mission you are calling us to.