

# Courage

## Reformation Sunday 2021

### **Scripture Reading – Matthew 10:16-33**

#### ***Introduction***

Today is Reformation Sunday, the day we remember Martin Luther and his nailing the 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. It took a man with courage to take a stand against what he saw was a wrong focus and emphasis by the church.

#### ***Do Not Be Afraid***

"Do not be afraid" appears in one translation 70 times. This doesn't include variants such as "fear not," "do not fear," and the like. Clearly, God knew we as people were prone to being afraid and wanted to make sure we knew that was not how we are supposed to live.

#### ***Courage in the big task – Joshua – Joshua 1:1-9***

*Joshua 1:9 - 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 was given an enormous task. Lead this rebellious people who gave trouble to Moses, an imperfect but major leader, so much trouble that the generation that came out of Egypt could not go into the Promised Land. God opens this chapter of Joshua's life with a task (go into the land), a command (be strong and full of courage) and a promise (I will not leave you or forsake you). The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

#### ***Courage at the strategic time – Esther – Esther 4:1-14***

Esther had courage at a strategic moment. The book of Esther clearly reveals God at work. The orchestration, the amazing reversals, and the poetic justice that led to the deliverance of the Jews in Persia all proclaim the presence of God. In Esther's story, the Lord redeems His people through the faith and courage of one strategically placed woman and her cousin. All the while, things are happening behind the scenes to bring about the final result.

In God's time he will give you opportunities. Opportunities to reach out a helping hand in the name of Jesus, speak truth to someone, to stand against evil plots, to resist a clear and present danger. When the time comes...be bold. And say with Esther, If I perish, I perish.

#### ***Courage to worship – Daniel – Daniel 6:1-10***

Daniel has the courage to worship. To live his life before the face of God. The enemy will do anything to stop us from worshiping the One True God. And standing up to the enemy takes courage. You might say, "He can't stop us from believing in God." but if he can distract us from bowing to Him, that's a victory he greatly enjoys. In Daniel they said you could only pray to the king. Satan has a knack for knowing what will turn our eyes from God. Sometimes it's obvious like this. Sometimes it is a lot more subtle. We need to know the Biblical truths to combat Satan, and pray for the wisdom, determination, and courage to say, no!

#### ***Courage in the face of death - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - Daniel 3:8-16***

They had courage in the face of death. Courage is taking a stand even when the risk is really high. Courage is not bowing down to the idols of our world. There is a confidence with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego because they know that God has saved, does save, can save. But even if He chooses not to, according to His perfect plan, God will be glorified. And they are not supposed to be afraid, they are to be courageous.

#### ***Courage to ask for forgiveness – Samson - Judges 16:23-30***

The next one I want to look at is a man who had more failures than he had successes. Samson. Samson was one of the judges of Israel, so his story can be found in the book of the Judges. When we hear the name "Samson," we think of his

great physical strength. Unfortunately, it is easier to be physically strong than morally strong. Samson found this to be true again and again throughout his life.

At the end of his life Samson found a different kind of courage than he had had in the past. Samson found the courage to ask God to forgive him. This final act of courage and strength brought Samson more success than a lifetime of physical strength marred by immorality and foolishness. The Bible lists Samson with other great heroes of the faith, including Abraham and Moses, as someone whose life encourages us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” so that we can “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 11:32; 12:1).

This is the courage that empowers us to ask God to “remember” us and give us wisdom no matter how often we have been foolish in the past.

### ***Courage in living the gospel - The Disciples***

The disciples walk with Jesus for three years, see his miracles, stumble, fall, listen and learn. They see him crucified, buried and then they called to a mountain in Galilee to see the risen Christ. Then Jesus gives them the great commission in the book of Matthew. Later as he ascends into heaven, he tells them in Acts 1:

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Then Pentecost comes in Acts chapter 2 and then...they went. And everything that Jesus said would happen in Matthew 10 did happen.

Over the next 65 years, through the reigns of about 12 Roman emperors, they took the gospel to the ends of the earth. Peter among others had the courage to pick himself up and have enough faith to have courage. They had courage like Joshua undertaking an enormous task, evangelizing the world. They had courage at the right time like Esther. Thomas might have doubted but tradition says he traveled to India and established the church there. They had courage like Daniel to live their lives before the face of God, ignoring the dictates of the secular rulers and the persecution that followed. And they had courage in the face of death like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Even though they were crucified, stoned, stabbed, dragged, skinned and burned, every last apostle of Jesus proclaimed the resurrection until his dying breath, refusing to recant under pressure from the authorities. That is courage.

### ***Conclusion***

First, God created you for a higher purpose. God chose you, and gave you a purpose before you were even born. When God created heaven and earth, he knew that one day you would find yourself right where you are at this moment. You have been created in the image of God, and you were made for a purpose. One of the most important things you can do, then, is to seek God’s guidance concerning what your main mission should be, and how you can best fulfill it.

Second, we cannot accomplish God’s purposes for us in our own strength. The Biblical message to us is that we can confidently say with Paul, “I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). Peter also reminds us that “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3).

Third, be warned: When you understand the purpose God has for you, and you tap into the strength He wants to give you, there will also be people who attempt to come against you. So many of the folks we have talked about faced opposition, from leaders, from enemies. Samson was often his own worst enemy.

In much the same way, as we seek to honor God and to obey his will for our lives, we’re going to face opposition. Jesus said in John 15:20, “‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” A chapter later Jesus says, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Seek after God’s purpose for your life; count on his strength to help you fulfill it, rely on his wisdom and abiding presence to overcome obstacles, and with his help you can walk in the supernatural strength of the God. We are at war. The battle is real. And God has called us to have courage.