

March 27, 2022

Texts: Joshua 5: 9-12; 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21

“When We’re in a Time of Transition”

Things are changing in our world today at an incredible speed, aren’t they? It’s been said that we live in a time of transition. Yesterday, my sister’s family celebrated her mother-in-law’s one hundredth birthday. She was born in 1922. Here are some facts I thought you might find interesting about life a hundred years ago.

The average life expectancy in the U.S. was 60. Only 35% of the homes had a telephone. The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph. Massachusetts had a larger population than California.

The average wage in the U.S. had just risen to \$0.65 an hour. Most women only washed their hair once a month and used borax or egg yolks for shampoo. The three leading causes of death in the US were: 1. Pneumonia, Influenza, and Tuberculosis. The population of Las Vegas, Nevada was 2,300. Only 16% of Americans had graduated from high school. And my favorite statistic: There were only about 230 reported murders in the entire U.S. One hundred years ago.

Our lesson from Joshua chapter five is about a time of transition in the life of Israel. Moses has died and now Joshua is the leader. The children of Israel have wandered in the wilderness for forty years. During this time God provided food for them called “manna.” Now the Israelites have entered the Promised Land and are beginning to take possession of it.

Then we come to this important verse, Joshua 5:12: “The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.” They were now on their own in providing food. A challenging time no doubt for all.

FOR A LOT OF US, CHANGE CAN BE DIFFICULT, VERY DIFFICULT.

As we get older, we seem to fear change even more. Young people have grown up in a world of change. Need someone to handle problems with your computer? Seems like young people are naturally able to handle it.

There comes a time in life when we become set in our ways. The story is told of an elderly woman living in a remote valley in Wales who went to a lot of trouble to have electricity installed in her home. Because she was the only customer in the area, installation was very expensive. Three months later, according to her electric bill, she had consumed practically no electricity at all.

When asked whether the cost of installation was worth it, she said, “Oh, yes!” “I switch the electricity on every night to see to light my lamps. Then I switch it off.” Did you get that? Despite having electric lighting, she continued the filling and lighting her oil lamps. But you don’t have to be in the later years of life to fear change. Change disrupts our familiar ways of doing things. It’s often not so much that the change is the wrong thing although, like anything, most new ideas have a downside to watch out for, it just the fact that the new thing is different...not what we’re used to which causes us to feel uncomfortable.

AT SUCH TIMES WE WOULD DO GOOD TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING SOLID WE CAN HOLD ON TO. And, of course, that's one of the reasons we're here today. We want to know that we can still depend on God!

In the wilderness, Israel was dependent on God for manna and for water, and God was faithful in providing for those needs. Now they would have to plant crops and herd sheep. They still had to depend on God. It's just that God's provision may not have then been as apparent as it had been.

You and I are even farther removed from experiencing firsthand God's daily providence, since most of us don't even plant our own crops. Ask any farmer dependent on the weather if they depend on God. It's so easy to think our success is all our achievement and we leave God out of our thinking all together.

Thus the Good News for today: **GOD IS STILL WITH US, JUST AS SURELY AS HE WAS WITH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO.** In this world of rapid and sometimes frightening change, one thing doesn't change, God still loves and watches over His people. But that doesn't mean that life is easy or change is easy.

Some of you may have seen a rock formation known as the Old Man of the Mountain in New Hampshire. The Old Man of the Mountain was, until recently, a 40-foot tall natural outcropping of granite ledges in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, which looked like the profile of an old man.

Two hundred years ago Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a famous story about it: “The Great Stone Face,” which some of you may have read in school. The image of the Old Man of the Mountain was on New Hampshire license plates and quarters and about a million souvenirs; it was the official state emblem.

But on May 1 or 2, 2003, in a heavy fog, the face of the Old Man of the Mountain fell. It broke apart and slid down the mountain in the dark. Steven Heath, who lived nearby said, “It’s something that’s been a part of our lives forever. At first there was disbelief. No one could believe he came down. It’s like a member of your family dying.” Another said, “I’m absolutely devastated by this. It makes you wonder if God is unhappy with what’s going on.” But the Bible teaches again and again there is only one Rock that will never crumble: ‘Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.’”

Someone has noted that the Bible contains more than 7,000 promises to cover almost any situation you’ll ever encounter. One of my favorites is this one: “My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

This is a time of transition, a time of rapid change. At times like this, you want something solid to hold on to. The same God who supplied water and manna to a nation of runaway slaves 3,000 years ago is the same God who is with you and me today. God will supply our needs as surely as He supplied their needs. Rest on this: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.” Amen.