

Joshua 5:13-15: You're Already on Holy Ground

\*Nicole: Pastor Mindie and I are so excited to be with you and share In Mother's Day Sunday-together. Because if there is one thing that we have learned in this season it's that we need each other like never before. It's our hope that this message will encourage you no matter where you are. let's pray together.

Mindie: Prayer

Mindie: Over the past several weeks we've been preparing to leave the wilderness and anticipating what might be on the other side. And to do that, we've been walking through the book of Joshua and seeing what God has to say to us as we move out of the immediate crisis of this global pandemic and into an unknown place of possibility. Along the way we've learned that hope is in sight, to overcome spiritual distancing and we've seen how God can work even in the middle of crisis.

Nicole: When we came to this week the initial thought was that Mother's Day didn't quite fit within that narrative. But then we started thinking about what life has been like for us as mothers in the midst of this global pandemic and we knew that wilderness was not only related- it was right where we are.

Mindie: Where millions of mothers are- who have lost her job and still haven't found another one

Nicole: grandmothers who waited over a year and a half just to feel their grandchildren's arms around hers.

Mindie:A step-mothers who are struggling to balance working full time and e-learning so that their high schoolers will graduate

Nicole: new mothers who heard it takes a village to raise a child but not finding one over the last year has left them isolated and overwhelmed.

Mindie: or those who have lost their mothers to covid and are grieving not just for their lives but, for the inability to gather with others in her death.

Nicole: We, mothers... we have been in the wilderness. Because it's Mother's Day pastor Mindie and I wanted to stand up here and tell you that the wilderness is over! That this season of hardship and challenge and difficulty is all behind us! But that wouldn't be true. Instead we want to tell you the three promises that God gives to Joshua and us and so that no matter what's next or where's next- we will always be able to navigate your way with God.

So first let's set the scene: in our text we find Joshua. Joshua was the right hand man of Moses. Watching as Moses lead the people through the wilderness, made manna come down from heaven and part whole bodies of water so the people could pass on dry ground. But now, Moses has died. The journey through the wilderness has come to an end and now- Joshua stands on the edge of the promised land. Now he's got to lead the people. He's got to make the decisions. He's got to move forward.

If that biblical description still seems obscure or unrelatable- think of it as the curb. You know the curb- The place where the nurse wheels you after you've given birth, you've been discharged and now you have to go home, you have to wake up for all of the middle of the night feedings, you have to change all the diapers – There's no more Moses, no more nurses- you have to do this on your own- that's where Joshua is- out of wilderness and absolutely unsure of how in the world he'll move ahead.

Mindie: Well, Pastor Nicole, I remember that moment full of uncertainty and some fear. And maybe you've had that moment yourself- whether it's on a hospital curb or another significant change in your life.

Whatever that's looked like, it's in this place of uncertainty and wondering what comes next, that Joshua receives his first promise from God. Now, this first promise is one that means so much to me that I even have it stamped on this necklace- the word WORTHY. When God's messenger shows up and tells Joshua he's on Holy Ground, what he's telling him is that Joshua is worthy to stand in God's presence. Worthy before the work begins. And this is a promise that I think we can forget all too quickly as we go through the challenges of our lives.

What's so powerful about this promise is that when Joshua receives it, there's an awful lot of story that hasn't happened yet. **And we know that because it says Joshua has this encounter when he was NEAR Jericho.** Not when Joshua was standing in the newly conquered land. Not when Joshua was resting after a long day of battle. No- this first promise is for Joshua before any of those victories have happened.

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And when God shows up with this promise, it doesn't come with expectations or comparisons to the leader that came before that Pastor Nicole told us about. God is faithful to Joshua and he's worthy to be in that holy space because that's just how God sees him.

Joshua is worthy to be on that holy ground because **God's presence and approval don't depend on anything we've done.** Joshua's worth is solidified from the very start simply because God says so. Joshua didn't need to wait on the victory to know he's enough because God was already right there with him.

Have you ever needed that reminder- that you're worthy just because, and you don't have to do anything to prove it? When I was commissioned as a Deacon last summer, it was kind of a strange process because I'd been serving in churches since I was in

college, but wasn't ordained yet. And because I'd lived in that in-between space for awhile, in many ways, I wondered if I could live up to this call- if I was actually worthy of the work that was ahead of me.

There was a lot of self-doubt in that season, and I really needed to be reminded that God was with me and that who I was enough. And I received this reminder...in probably the most nerdy pastoral way of all...through a set of commentaries.

I had a feeling these commentaries were coming from my husband in gift form because I had dropped a lot of not at all subtle hints for years about these books. But what I didn't know was that Zack had gone a above and beyond with this gift- he'd reached out to friends, mentors, role models to write me notes affirming my call as a pastor and put them in the cover of each commentary.

These notes came from some of the most important people in my life, full of encouragement, full of affirmation, full of reminders of my worth. And you know what? No matter who the note came from, not a single note had any conditions attached. Not a single note said "this thing I've written about you will be true if you only accomplish x, y, and z." Not a single affirmation needed me to do anything to earn it. These friends and role models thought I was worthy of the work ahead...just because they knew me and believed that God was at work in my life. They weren't looking for proof, they were just showing up to tell me I was worthy.

Commented [2]: Picture of Commentaries (I'll email)

The way these people wrote their notes reminds me of the promise God gives Joshua and the promise God gives us. God isn't looking for proof! God is just faithful. I think this is one of the hardest things to understand- that we have a God whose grace is for us and who sees us as worthy just because that's who God is! It's hard to understand, but here's what it all comes down to for me- **our worth isn't found in anything we can do, but in the one who does more than we can ever even imagine.**

**Our worth is found in the one who does more than we can ever imagine.**

Commented [3]: Slide with this text

And that promise? It's never subject to conditions or comparison. There are no strings attached. It's a promise that God keeps because that's who our God is and that's how our God sees us.

**Nicole:** But let's be honest pastor mindie- we may say, "I am worthy" but it's hard to believe. The truth is, we look around the battlefields of our own lives and we feel anything but worthy. Instead we see every defeat, every plan that never came to pass, every dream this pandemic deferred and worthiness seems as far away as the promised land- but that's where the second promise of God steps in: **God meets Joshua with a messenger and God will meet you with one too.**

You see, Joshua is not just met by any Angel but by the only Angel in all of the Bible who gives his resume! It's right here in verse 14 - the Angel tells Joshua- I am a commander in the Lord's army. And I couldn't help but wonder why it was necessary for

this angel to share his linkedin profile? But then it dawned on me: God doesn't just send messengers but God sends witnesses. God sends people into our lives who give more than advice but offer wisdom because they have been where God is calling us to go.

Because we've all experienced those people who mean well, but who don't know one thing- not one thing thing-about what we're going through. People who are google experts and not battle experts. People who read the book, but haven't lived a single chapter. But that doesn't stop them from offering advice. From sharing their opinion. From criticizing what we're doing or how we're doing it. And God knows we don't need another critic, we don't need another evaluator, we need someone who knows.

SO, God sends Joshua a commander in the Lords Army or someone who knows what it's like to face an enemy, someone who knows what it's like to feel the defeat of a battle and still have to keep fighting for the war, someone knows what it's like to try and lead a group of people who don't want to follow-sounds like motherhood to me- No, God doesn't just send anyone but someone who knows. Someone who tell him, commander to commander, you are not the only one! I've been where you're going, I faced what you have faced and I'm standing next to you.

And I don't know what battlefield you may be on, or you may be on, or you may be on today. But here's what I know for sure: **God will send you a messenger who's been through it and who will stand next to you.**

And I can tell you that today not just because that's what this angelic commander is doing for Joshua but because I have received those godly messengers in some of the most difficult moments of my life. In fact one of those messengers met me in the delivery room when I became a mother. I was trying to deliver my first child and after 24 hours of trying to push this 10 pound baby into the world the only thing that was moving was my baby's heart rate. It was reaching a rate that began to worry the doctor and nurses and so they called for the birthing coach.

When she came into the room she announced that she had never had a child but she learned that if you close your eyes, visualize a peaceful scene like waves lapping against the shore or kittens softly playing with a ball of yarn then all of a sudden my mind would relax, my breathing would slow down my heart rate would decrease and I would forget that I was in labor and be lulled into a peaceful and melodic sleep. She then asked me could I hear the water? Could I hear the water?

St. Luke's, I could not hear the water. But I heard my mouth begin to form some words that were not as peaceful, that were not calm or relaxing! But before I could get them out of my mouth another nurse stepped into the room. She grabbed my hand, she looked me in the eye and she said I've had five children. And this is going to be some of the worst pain you will ever feel in your life! But, I'm going to be right here standing next to you, helping you to get through it.

God sent me a messenger who hadn't just read the book but had been through the battle. God sent me a messenger who couldn't just offer up other people's experiences but an experience that she had lived and survived herself. God sent me a messenger who stood right there and helped me get through it- and God will send you one too!

But here's the challenge: **it's easy to miss the messenger.** Remember in our text, that when the Angel approached Joshua he was ready to fight! He doesn't offer a word of welcome or greeting -he just blurts out, whose side are you on? Because he anticipates that anyone coming toward him is either/ or, friend or foe- and not possibly a messenger God sent to meet him. Ever feel like that? Ever been so overwhelmed, that you can't even imagine that you're enough or that you can make it through? That you can't even recognize someone that God has sent to bless you? I imagine many mothers feel like that- and pastor mindie and I sat down with three in our congregation who heard from messengers we often miss- messengers that changed their mind.

\*\*\*\*\*Launch video\*\*\*\*\*

Nicole : When we watch that video we see mothers who like Joshua, question if they are worthy, capable or good enough. And yet, God sends each of them a messenger to remind them and us we are worthy. But there's here's one final Promise we learn from this text: **we have already arrived.**

When we pick back up with Joshua in this text he is still not where he wants to be. He's in that hard middle place with the wilderness behind him and the promised land ahead of him. In that place, He like so many mothers is repeating the refrain, " if I can just". If I can just get to the promised land or get them out of diapers, get them into kindergarten, get them into high school, get them through dating, get them through college, get them out of my basement,- there and then all of gods blessings and all of God's power will be evident in my life.

But don't miss this: it's not in perfection where Joshua meets God, no it's on that hard middle ground, where things are still unsettled, where the battle is still not over- that's where God meets him. In verse 15, the messenger tells Joshua take off your shoes you're on holy ground.

Every mother, godmother, step mother, grandmother, great grandmother, mother figure or mother to be hear me now: you're already on holy ground.

There's no perfect place or time out in the future where you've got it all together, that God will be with you. No, **God is here, right here, right now and you've already arrived.**

And so maybe the question we need to ask ourselves this morning is not when will I get to the promised land, but **when will I see the promise on the land I'm already standing on?** When will I see that because God is here this place this is holy ground?

Mindie: And just in case you think we're preaching TO you, just know we're talking about and TO ourselves today.

Because I did this same thing just the other weekend. We had made a lot of plans for our day, and one by one, all of those plans fell through. I remember at one point in the afternoon saying out loud- "This day was a total let down."

Now, fast forward to dinner, I'm tired and disappointed, and I asked the kids my usual dinner question, maybe it's yours too- "How was your day?". To my shock, our seven year old Hazel looked at me and said, "THIS WAS THE BEST DAY OF MY ENTIRE LIFE!" And as she started to name WHY it was the best day, I realized- all the things that I thought weren't good enough about the day were all of the things that made it so great to her!

And so just like the moms we saw in the video, just like Joshua talking to the messenger, sometimes all it takes to find the holy ground is stopping long enough to see what's right in front of us. To listen to the people in our lives. To find that encouragement that can seem out of reach but might be closer than we think.

Because you know what? When life is hard, and these promises seem far away, that's when we lean on each other. That's when we show up, and show hope. That's when we get to be living reminders of God's promises to us.

Like we said at the very beginning- we'd love to tell you that the hard season is over. We'd REALLY love to tell you what's coming next. And...we can't. We can't know what comes after the wilderness. Joshua really didn't know all that would come after HIS wilderness.

But what we CAN know is that our God will be faithful with us, no matter what this next season looks like. What we CAN know is that the God who gave Joshua these promises as he stands in the place of something new, is the same God who works in us today.

Prayer Nicole

Benediction:

Mindie: Today we want to help you be that voice of encouragement for either a mom, mom figure, or anyone else you love and want to remind of these promises we talked about today. If you're here in person, as you leave you will see cards that you can take with you- some say Happy Mother's Day, some are St. Luke's logo. If you're online, you'll see a link to an e card that you can send.

Nicole: Blessing

Do you have someone to tell that this is the best day ever? To encourage, to help see the reasons?

- The charge- look for the reminders or GIVE the reminders ( Mindie and Nicole)

