

A new day

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] This is the 6th of January 2019, it's a new year, it's the first Sunday, it's the first Lord's Day in this new year and we tend to mark that as we meet each other in the street and at the door of the church and around the village, when there's a new year we tend to mark that, it's a significant time, it's a significant date and we greet each other and we're conscious of that and as we return to Joshua chapter 18, we find them as God's people and they're all gathered together much like we are, although in great numbers compared to ourselves, we find them in this passage this evening, Joshua 18, they're all gathered together at Shiloh and this was a significant occasion for them, it wasn't the first Lord's

Day in a new year, it wasn't the first day in a new year but this was a significant occasion for God's people, it's what one of the commentators Dale Ralph Davis describes as a new day and that's our first point this evening, this is a new day, we read in verse 1 there, the whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there, the country was brought under their control and that was a new thing, this was a new experience for God's people, up until this point and we've gone through much of the blood and the grit and the guts of this in the book of Joshua thus far, some uncomfortable reading and up until this point, God's people, they had been struggling, there had been much warfare, there had been much attack, there had been much danger and risk to contend with, their experience had been a bloody experience, there had been warfare and all that they experienced in terms of that conflict and tension was because they were God's people, what they experienced in terms of the struggle was because they were God's people and they were following God's commands and they were going God's way and they were being obedient to God's word. They had been in Egypt and the Lord had led them out of Egypt into the wilderness in the direction of the promised land and yet as they began to enter the land that God had determined that they would go into, they met much in the way of opposition and trouble. Not because they were deviating from God's way, but because they were travelling God's way. And I think that's an important point for us to note just at the beginning of this new year. We need this reminder I think from time to time.

When we go God's way, when we determine as individuals, as a congregation, as a people, that we will follow God's plan. When we determine that in a world that is increasingly hostile to the gospel, we will hold fast to it.

Then we're going against the flow of the world. When you determine in your life as a Christian that you will seek to glorify God, then you can expect that you will go into combat with Satan. You can expect battles. Boys and girls, John, Bella, the older ones as well. If you're Christians, and in the playground in school, or amongst your friend groups when you're a bit older, you're courageous enough to say, I'm a Christian. I trust in Jesus. Then very often what you find is people, people can laugh at you.

And they can be cruel towards you. Not always, but sometimes. And when that happens, we tend to think, what am I doing wrong? Why is it that I'm experiencing this?

[4 : 51] What is it that I've done wrong? And God in his word, so many times, and also tonight as we note this, says to us, you're not doing anything wrong.

Jesus said, if they persecuted me, they're going to have a go at you too. If you're going to go in my way, in a world that hates me, there's going to be battles sometimes.

So, be prepared for them. But don't worry, says Jesus. I'll be with you in the playground. I'll be with you when you go through them. And the children of Israel, God's people, they had experienced so many battles over the years.

But this was a new day. It was a new day. This was a day where they were able to meet together openly at Shiloh.

This was a day when they were all able to gather together in one place with that desire to worship God and they weren't scared of being attacked. They weren't grenades flying in.

[6 : 08] They weren't just poised to defend themselves against an ambush. It says in verse 1, the country was brought under their control and God had done that for them and God had done that with them.

They'd been given rest from their enemies. And so now they had entered a new day and they were found gathered together in the place of worship.

And that must have been such a joyful experience for them to know that freedom, to know that liberty to be able to come together to worship God.

They wouldn't have taken it for granted. And I think the point I would seek to make tonight, I'm going to skip past various things. And I think the one point I would make an application here is the liberty and the freedom that we have to be able to gather together tonight as we do.

We are not fearful that the windows are going to get kicked in. We're not fearful that somebody's going to burst to the door. We have been given a degree of rest in our country where we are able to pick up various translations of the Bible.

[7 : 43] We're able to stand together and openly and freely worship God. So the new day that they began to experience there, a new day that pointed forward to the coming of Christ.

It is a day that we still enjoy. So let's not take for granted this privilege that we have to gather together as a whole assembly of God's people as they did on that first day in China.

And also let's not forget our brothers and our sisters in the persecuted church who don't have this privilege. I still have this bit of paper from a few weeks back.

It's got photographs of all these prisoner profiles, these people who are detained because they have faith in Jesus.

Look at all these faces there. All these people are in prison because they are saying I want to worship Jesus.

[9 : 02] And rather than saying that they'll stop worshipping Jesus they've said I'll go to prison. So let's be thankful for the freedom that we have but let's not forget these people.

Let's pray for a new day in China and Iran and Indonesia and Pakistan and Tajistan and North Korea and Eritrea.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. Let's pray for a new day for them. A new day. Second point is a new opportunity.

And you might say as you're glancing down through these verses well I don't see this in the text. I don't see what you're talking about in terms of an opportunity. We see the assembly of God's people gathering.

We see that this is the first time that they're freely and openly able to do this. We see this kind of new day for God's people. But what new opportunity is it that we see here? I don't see it.

[10 : 09] Well the people of Israel it seems didn't see the opportunity that God was giving them either. See when things were tough for God's people. If we were to flick back through some of these chapters into the earlier parts of Joshua, when things were at their toughest, when they were facing many, many difficult battles, there was a unity, there was strategic thinking, there was an alertness about God's people.

But now that they've entered the promised land, now that they have started to realise some of the blessings and benefits of the gift that God had given them and taken them through the wilderness and into this special land that he'd set aside for them, then what actually happened to God's people was that they took their foot off the gas.

see, they weren't under attack now, like they used to be, that they were less vulnerable now than they used to be.

So they kind of went to sleep before the job was done. In verse two it says, but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance.

And God had made clear he wanted these tribes to have their inheritance. He wanted these people to be in the land that he had determined that they would rest in. But they weren't there yet.

[11 : 56] And there seems to be a kind of contentment about the fact that they're not there yet.

They're not bothered about that. And so Joshua sounds the alarm in verse three. And Joshua says to the Israelites, how long will you wait?

The Hebrew word there for wait by the way is how long will you be slack? How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors has given you?

Moses, he sounds the alarm bell. He says to God's people, he says you need to wake up. when things were tough, he would alert, but now that things have eased off, you're starting to doze, you're starting to fall asleep.

This new freedom and peace that they have, this new control that God had given them of the land, it was actually an opportunity for God's people to push forward and to advance at speed and to take the land so that God would be glorified.

they had a new opportunity. And I can't help but just apply this to us as a congregation even.

[13:21] The last four years on reflection, we tend to reflect about New Year's time. The last four years at times have been turbulent. as we've sought to follow God's word, as we've sought to go God's way, at times there have been attacks, at times we have experienced what we sang in the hymn, dangers, toils and snares.

We've had to be alert. We've had to daily seek God's help. God has been good to us.

He's blessed us with so much more than we could ever have imagined. Certainly I could have. And we know something of that even as we sit here.

But we must not go to sleep. sleep. I think that's the point that we need to take from Joshua 18.

We're thankful for all that God has done and is doing.

but let's be careful never to go to sleep. The Lord blesses us in order that we will be a blessing in the place that he puts us.

[14:54] The Lord gives us resources and buildings and gifts in order that we will use them to glorify him and to reach out with this glorious gospel that he has entrusted to us.

So I think the point for me and for us all to grasp is that we are not to lose sight of the opportunity that God gives us to advance.

Let's be ever full of zeal to want to advance and to reach the lost with the gospel. Let's seek to take possession of the land to use Joshua's language.

Not for our glory, not for our reputation, not because of any denominational thing, but for God's glory, for the salvation of souls.

There are people in Tarbert tonight who don't know the gospel. They don't really know who Jesus is. they don't know why he came. They don't know really what he's asking them to do.

[16:06] And our job is to reach out to go out into this community, to advance, to pray for, and then to see and grasp the opportunities that God gives us in every new day that he allows us to have.

Remember Jesus' words to the disciples? We can imagine the disciples somewhat sleeping, somewhat lacking in vision. and Jesus essentially says to them one day, he says, wake up.

Wake up. John 4, 35, do not say four months more and then the harvest. I tell you, says Jesus, open your eyes and look at the fields.

They are ripe for harvest. Luke 10, and at verse 2, Jesus says, the harvest are plentiful, the workers are few.

Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to go send out workers into his harvest field. Go, says Jesus, I am sending you.

[17:49] They were experiencing a new day, a day of peace, a day where they had a degree of rest and because they were experiencing this new day, they had new opportunities that God was calling them to see and calling them to grasp.

Two more points, but there's no more time, so may God add his blessing to the reading of his word.

Let's pray. our heavenly father, we do thank you once more for the privilege that we have of being able to join together in this place this evening, this place that you have brought this into and you have given to us.

We thank you for the country that we live in and the freedom that we have to be able to gather as we do to lift up the name of Jesus. We thank you for the Bibles that are in our hands, the many translations that are available to us.

We thank you that we have such huge access to hear the good news about Jesus. We thank you that we have the freedom in this day and age to be able to reach out in conversation and on social media and in letters and in emails.

We have so many different ways that we can reach out with the good news. about Jesus and we do ask Lord that in this day of freedom even though there is hostility to the gospel and even though we come under attack, Lord you said that's the way it will always be.

[19 : 31] But we thank you that still we are able to speak and we ask that you would give us opportunities and that you would help us to see them. We pray that you would give us courage and whether we're in the playground or whether we're in the workplace whether we're meeting with friends or whether we're in our family home.

We ask Lord that you would enable us as those who are trusting in Jesus, those who are trusting here in Christ. We pray that the blessings that we have received in the gospel we would not hoard but we would share.

Help us we pray to have the vision to see that the fields are white and to harvest. help us we pray to have the courage to go out in the name of Jesus to speak about Jesus and to call others to follow him.

We ask all this in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen.