

The God Who Is Generous

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[0 : 00] So, we sung there of inheritance, and the inheritance that David spoke about was really dealing with some of these passages that we're reading in Joshua.

So if you remember, Joshua's about taking of the land of promise, the land flowing with milk and honey, that God has promised to Moses, to Abraham actually, and then to Moses, and but they have wandered through the desert for forty years because they didn't believe and trust in God, that God would be able to help them defeat their enemies and take the land of Canaan.

So the section that Billy read, chapter thirteen, is that kind of language that the inheritance is spoken of there, that's given to a couple of the tribes, that's repeated ten, ten, eleven, twelve times, right up to chapter, seven chapters like that, so you're maybe glad I didn't read all seven chapters like that.

But I'm just going to read another section, which is slightly different, it's a kind of breathing space in the middle, Joshua fourteen, verses six to verse fifteen, it's a lovely little passage and it's about Caleb, if you remember Caleb, we didn't do it in Joshua, but we've referenced it, Caleb was one of the two spies originally who said, yes, we can take the land, but the other, the other spy said, no, no, no, no, no, no, it's, there's too many enemies, it's too strong and too big, and that disobedience, that lack of faith led to them wandering in the desert, so this is Caleb's story and it is getting his inheritance.

Chapter fourteen, verse six, then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal and Caleb, the son of Japhunni, the Kenesite, said to him, you know what the Lord said to Moses, the man of God in Keresh Barnea, concerning you and me, I was forty years old, when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Keresh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart, but my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, yet I wholly followed the Lord my God, and Moses swore on that day, saying, surely the land of which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and for your children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God, and now behold, the Lord has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the Lord spoke his word to Moses while Israel walked in the wilderness in the desert, and now behold, I am this day eighty-five years old, I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me, my strength now is as my strength was then for war and for going and coming, so now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anarchim were there, with great fortified cities it may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said.

[3 : 23] Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jefune for an inheritance, therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb, son of Jefune, the kenozite, to this day because he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel, now the name of Hebron formally was Kireeth Arba, Arba was the greatest man among the Anarchim, and the land had rest from war.

Okay, we are going to look at, skip kind of these chapters all in one, we are going to deal with them all in one, from thirteen to twenty-one, and we have missed out one or two things, but we are just giving a quick overview of Joshua.

So maybe the first question is Sunday night, so darkness is closing in, weirdness is beginning to set in, and you are reading a passage like this and you would say, why?

Why? You know, why does God, I mean the Bible is not that big, why does God choose to record these things in such detail, all the land and the boundaries and the names and the areas and the inheritance that was handed, why does He give it all to all the different tribes in such detail for us as part of His living God?

Who is interested? Who is interested in the ancient Near East towns and villages and conquests, and what the exact details of who was assigned and given what in the land, you know?

[4 : 58] Doesn't that just play into the hands of those who say the Bible is a dead, dull, dry, dusty, old book, boring, repetitive, irrelevant, and even quirky?

Is it not all a bit quirky? And our sophisticated twenty-first century minds that we have to go back and read this kind of thing? I think when we first come to passages like that, we can naturally have these kind of instincts, and I know many people have had, I know I've asked many times in the past, you know, why are these passages in the Bible?

Why are they so long? Why did God choose to put them there? Because we work from the premise that this is God's living word, don't we? And we work from the premise that God is right, and God is wise, and God is good, and God deliberately has chosen to do this.

And so we need to ask the question, then why did He choose to do this? Well, I think because in reality, what we see when we go to a passage like this is it deals with some very important themes. I admit we need to dig a little bit sometimes. We have to pick on some of the shadows that are here, some of the key words. But we recognize that these bits of the Bible point to some, what can we say, more crucial parts, more crucial parts of the revelation of God's word.

[6 : 20] All of the Bible is equal in its significance and its import and its vitality, but all of it is a one, and all of it points ultimately to Jesus Christ and to the work that Scotty was mentioning this morning in his sermon, the work of God and his redemptive purposes and plans for all humanity.

You wouldn't come to this. I would certainly argue you wouldn't take these seven chapters or eight chapters actually and meditate on them in the same way that you would meditate on say Ephesians or Galatians or the Gospels.

You wouldn't take each verse and maybe just take one verse for a day because it's a very different part of the Bible. It's a narrative for a start. And so it's good sometimes just to have all the chunks. So if you, if time, read the chunk, read the whole chunk at some point. It wouldn't take long. Why is it here? Well, there's one or two things we're going to say. First thing is, it's here because it's real. Okay, but because it's real. That's why it's here because it's history, his story. But it's history. You know, these events happened. The people entered the Promised Land.

[7 : 34] They defeated the Canaanites as we saw and as we've been looking at previously. It's part of God's story, of God's people in God's world, with God's purposes being outworked in that part of history.

And it's part of a bigger picture of God in the world in which we are the twenty-first century, part of that. So it's part of God's big picture in history.

And because of that, we recognize it as being real. Now, because it's real, imagine if you were part of a family gathering where your rich uncle was going to read out, well, he wasn't because he had deceased, but your rich uncle, family or lawyer was going to read out his will, his inheritance.

And you knew that you were part of that and that everyone in the room was going to get something in that inheritance from your rich uncle. You would want the details, wouldn't you?

You would want to listen carefully. You would want to know exactly what you'd been gifted because that would be significant. If your rich uncle just said, well, you know, just divide it out however you think yourselves.

[8 : 53] Well, that leads to war, doesn't it? That leads to family chaos. How much of the world's chaos is caused by family division over land or property or money?

Massive amounts. And so God here, in dealing with these twelve tribes, is intricately and accurately dividing out the inheritance that Moses, he'd spoken to Moses about and to Abraham about getting the land.

And it was very real to them. As they read this, as they heard what Joshua was saying, it was absolutely real to them. And of course there's more than simply the reality of the physical inheritance being given and what God was doing, as we'll go on to see.

So it's real. This is history. And interestingly, isn't it? It's history that deals with the big things of life, people and land.

That's two of the biggest things in the world, isn't it, people and land? That's what makes up this world, people and land. So you've got roughly 7.3 billion people in this world.

[10 : 09] Probably the estimates are that there's been a hundred billion people, roughly, who have lived since the beginning of time. And there's 13 billion hectares of land.

So there's lots of people and there's lots of land. And that's what makes up this world that we walk on and that we live in. People and land kind of highlight who we are.

It's in our DNA to be people and to live and own and work on and be part of the land. But it's also, and there's actually quite a lot of, there's quite a lot of symmetry between what I'm going to say and

what Scotty said this morning.

Well, he said it much better than me because I could have listened to that all day. But there's this great link.

He spoke about the great creation of the Garden of Eden and that was people and land. And it speaks of what we've lost also, doesn't it, because of sin, in terms of people and relationship with God and the curse on land.

[11 : 22] So as image bearers, we see that these issues are fundamental to our humanity. As image bearers, people are hugely significant in the world and Joshua is dealing here with people and their inheritance.

We need each other. It's about love, isn't it, about family, about laughter and being born and nurtured and growing. And protecting one another and having that insatiable appetite for being alive together, for building homes, for cultivating, for possessing, for owning, for acquiring, for having, and for being in our homes, for sitting in our gardens.

We exalt the beauty of the mountains when we walk in them, the rivers, the forests, the amazing civilizations that have been built in this world in which we live, people and land.

And it also speaks of the brokenness that sin has brought into the world between people and people and land.

You know, the horrors of division and hatred and death and violence, people destroying one another very often over borders.

[12 : 33] We see it in the United States, we see it in Syria, we see it in Hong Kong, we see it in Barcelona, we see it in Scotland, we see it in the UK.

There's this great battle that is going on over land, getting away from one land, Vietnam, coming to another land, the UK, dying in the process in order to get here.

Battles and wars and protectionism, nationalism and all of the things that are making up this world in which we existed, we are part of people and land.

And that is what Joshua is dealing with here, and God is speaking into that, and He is speaking into that powerfully through the redemption story, isn't it?

In its entirety, it's the promise, as we saw this morning, the promise of redemption and healing and wholeness and homecoming and an inheritance.

[13 : 34] You know, Billy read about the inheritance that was given to one of the tribes, and right through Joshua 13-21 speaks about, this is your inheritance, this is your land, this is the gift you're being given, and we recognize and know spiritually that we too have an inheritance in Christ that only He alone can give, and He speaks into the deepest longings of our hearts and of our lives by gifting us that relationship with Him and the hope of land in the new heavens and the new earth, which we looked at already this morning.

And we try, don't we? We try to fulfill that with a thousand poor substitutes as we chase after the wind, only to know that our inheritance and our hope and our life and our future is with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.

So God speaks into it, this whole area of people and land in its entirety, in the big picture, but I think what a chapter like this or an area like this, part of the Bible like this also reminds us is that He speaks into these things in detail as well, okay?

So these chapters as I mentioned, they seem to be monotonous and fussy in their detail, but it was detail that mattered to God and mattered to the tribes who were receiving the inheritance.

And much of the promises of God speak into the detail of your life tomorrow, that it might seem fussy and it might seem a bit monotonous also, some of the stuff that God is interested in.

[15 : 25] And you might think that nobody else would be interested in the monotony of your life and the boredom of your life and the minutiae of your life, the stuff that doesn't make the front page, that doesn't make you significant in anyone else's eyes.

But what these passages tell us is that God is interested and cares about the minutiae and the details of our lives, and we can come to Him in prayer about all of the things that concern us, the fine-tuning elements of our lives, the things that you're worried about tonight and you're looking around and you think, what on earth am I, why am I concerned about these, God isn't interested in that, the people in the church aren't even interested in that, why would God be as the sovereign King of the universe because He gives us chapters like this with great detail, because He's not some kind of, He's not a vague insurance policy for us for the future, He's interested in the detail,

the struggles, the battles, the worries, the concerns we have, that's why He says, do not be worried, not because we don't worry, because He wants to take our worries to Him and lay them at His feet because He is interested in the detail and the minutiae of our lives.

So when you think sometimes like that, oh God, I wouldn't be interested in that, read these chapters, read about all the different little villages and towns and borders that are mentioned, and then ask yourself, is God not interested in the details and the small things?

So we see that it's real, and we also see it, the whole issue of land and people is being outworked by God with developing clarity throughout Scripture.

So what we have here is kind of, and you know that, we've looked at that before, it's God at work, isn't it? It's God at work, but it's almost, like it's almost prototypical, it's almost a prototype of what He's going on to do in Christ, it's pointing forward to something better, it's still real, they were giving the promised land, they entered the promised land, they were victorious in many ways, there were real promises that were made to Abraham and also to Moses about rescuing His people and giving them inheritance, giving them a home, giving them a land, giving them someone permanent to stay after the slavery and their wanderings in the desert for forty years, being their God, being among them, being their King, being with them.

[17:57] But it's only shadowy, isn't it? Because it's not the end of things. So Joshua's about taking the land and then possessing the land, but it's fulfilled in Christ, and we know that and we can see that and we understand that, don't we?

So we can say this evening, once you were not a people, but now you are a people, and we are bound together because of our relationship with Jesus.

It was interesting this morning, Scotty was standing at the door here, he was about to leave and he was speaking to Dean who had been on this AV, dealing with the AV yesterday, the conference and also today, and so he remembered his name and he was speaking to him and he said, you know, what do you do?

What's your job? And Dean said, you know, work with computers and algorithms and he went into this detailed explanation of kind of what he did with algorithms.

I don't know what he did, I don't know what it's about. It's pretty detailed and he's working in the guts of computers doing that kind of stuff. And Scotty said, oh well, we have nothing in common whatsoever apart from Jesus.

[19:15] He said, I have no mathematical mind and I could really sympathise with that. But that's true, isn't it? We come together, we are a disparate bunch of people, but we come together with that great, we've become a people.

We're not once a people, but now we are a people because the power of sin and death has been reversed in our lives. And we have been through repentance and faith, we're reunited with Jesus and we're also reunited with one another.

The division that sin brings to people and the land and the relationship between people and the land is turned on its head through Christ.

And we receive them as, I think it's quite interesting, they're a cruel irony, isn't it? Notice that death, death for each of us, it turns us to dust.

From dust we've come, dust we shall return. It's ironic that we end up in the land in death, but yet in resurrection we come alive again and we'll enter into a new relationship with the land.

[20:32] Jesus comes to rescue with the promises of God and with the hope of an inheritance for us. He takes away the futility of our living, especially in aging and death.

I'm not going to say anything about that just because I'm going to mention it with regard to Caleb at the end. But Christ's desolation and exile and abandonment on the cross and then resurrection is the gateway for our rescue as we come to Him recognizing what He has done in our place, enabling us to become a people who have an inheritance.

So it's fulfilled in Christ in power and also in generosity. So Christ gifts us salvation and gives us an inheritance.

So every believer has an inheritance. Christ is our rich uncle, as it were. And the New Testament picks up on this idea all the time, what we possess, what we own in deposit and looking forward to what we will own in the future.

And it's great. If you ever go online, if you ever use a... There's an app called Bible Gateway that you can use which if you type in a word, it will give you all...

[22 : 00] It's like an online concordance. It gives you all the references to that word in the Bible. So type in inheritance and then look at all the New Testament references to inheritance that you'll find.

There's lots of references to inheritance because it's all linked together because the New Testament writers recognized that what was happening in Joshua was simply a shadowy picture of what we're going to receive and what we receive in Jesus Christ.

We receive an inheritance. So Ephesians 1.13 speaks about that. It says, And you were also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

When you believed you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, given the life of God and the presence of a spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of His glory.

So there's something for us that's guaranteed because we have the Holy Spirit as Christians and it's life and it's going to be life to the full. And it's not yet in its fullness and we have this to look forward to and it happens because of His death.

[23 : 08] You know, the rich uncle has to die, doesn't he, to get the inheritance. It's a terrible thing. That's what the prodigal son stories about.

He wanted his father dead. So basically, so he could get, but what the inheritance anyway, even if he wasn't dead because he was going to, but he despised his father. So basically wanted him dead so he could get his money.

And to get an inheritance, the person needs to die. And Hebrews speaks about that. Hebrews 9 speaks about that, that Jesus had to die before we could receive the blessing of His death.

And obviously His death was unique in resurrection. His resurrection is in a sense part of that inheritance. Christ is the deposit, is the reality of our inheritance, is the fellowship with Him.

He's the one who never perishes, spoils or fades, unlike every other relationship. Some very sweet ones. We've lost this weekend.

[24 : 15] One very sweet one this weekend in Bill Anderson. And all the best relationships, perish, spoil and fade, they're broken in this world, apart from the one with our elder brother, with Jesus Christ.

We are never separated from Him, even though we die, yet we will live because of His resurrection. And the generosity of that is great, but it's not just a person of Jesus.

Jesus is our King, but also a kingdom, a land, a belonging, a spiritual reality, certainly, but with physical anticipation, which again we mentioned this morning, a new heavens and a new earth, a renewal of this world that we live in.

Every inch of it will belong to the living God, and we will be the inheritors of that. Homes, gardens, mountains, hills, rivers, infinitely more real, more beautiful and more unspoiled, people and land.

That's our hope and that's an inheritance, and that's what passages like this speak about. I'm just going to finish with an illustration of a great picture of faith in action.

[25 : 33] In the person of Caleb, we read that in the second passage, Caleb is just such a great character, love Caleb, Joshua chapter 14.

And he was the one who had great faith, or faith in a great God, isn't he? He was the one who believed God, just like Abraham did, and it was credit to him as righteousness.

One or two things about Caleb's faith, it was wholehearted. Verse 9, it's kind of verse 8 really, but my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, yet I wholly followed the Lord my God.

And then at the end of verse 9, surely the land in which Moses said, sure the land in which your foot is drawn shall be inheritance for you, for children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord your God, wholeheartedly followed the Lord your God.

He was a wholehearted, he had wholehearted faith. That's a great picture of faith, isn't it? Because he saw that as God was worth it, and there was nothing to compare to serving the living God.

[26 : 46] And we recognize that, and we see that God, our God as Christians is worth following wholeheartedly, as if who is second, sorry, Colossians 3, 23 and 24.

Whatever you do as a Christian, work heartily or wholeheartedly as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You're serving the Lord Christ. So when we go, when you go from here tomorrow, Sunday's okay, but tomorrow, in your workplace with the annoying person beside you, or with the struggles and battles that you're facing with health, or with accommodation, or with others and being bullied, or

whatever it might be that we are to, with all our heart, work and serve Jesus Christ, not in order to earn, but because there is this inheritance that is ours that we already possess.

And that passage in Colossians is surrounded by advice to who? Married couples, children, families, individuals, slaves, employees, employers.

It's dealing with the everyday grit and gristle of life, and we are to be wholehearted people of faith. And that comes from communion with God and recognizing who He is.

[28 : 15] So He's wholehearted, He was also trusting, wasn't He? Because He had trusted in the Lord. Verse 10, now behold, the Lord has kept me alive just as He said, these 45 years since the time that the Lord spoke His word to Moses while Israel walked in the desert, in the wilderness.

He had trusted the Lord for 45 years in the desert when that whole generation were wiped out because of their unbelief, and He knew that the promise of God was never empty.

And that's why we need to know the promises of God and trust Him. That's why His word is so vital in our lives, because it's a revelation of the divine person, and we need the help of the Holy Spirit, and that intentionality of trusting our life to Him.

Who do you trust as you go into the working week? To whom are you committed in trust? And it's not about having faith in your faith, because that's a council of despair.

So it's saying, how much faith I can work up? But it's about having faith in God, and looking to Him and communing with Him, speaking with Him, leaning on Him, repenting to Him, seeking His help, trusting when it seems absolutely impossible to trust Him.

[29 : 41] It was, He was wholehearted, He was trusting. He had robust faith, and this is the best, I really like this bit, the end of 10, B and 11.

He says, and now behold, this day I'm 85 years old, I'm still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me. My strength now is my strength was then for war and for coming and going.

It's a great little montage, isn't it, of His robustness. In old age, this great declaration of faith in God and not in Himself.

Now for some of us who are getting older, there's always the danger of finishing badly. There's always the danger of just giving up. It's so hard, or of just retiring from faith.

And yet here's this great old man of faith who had seen his faith strengthened and his trust in God's love and care that kept him alive for 45 years.

[30 : 44] And it's a great testimony of the importance of old people who are Christians, and old people who keep looking to the Lord.

And I want the young people here to recognize that. Recognize how important older people are here in the church. Because old people and older people who have been Christians for many years are able to declare God's strength even though maybe physically they may be feeling weaker.

Nothing better than an old enthusiast. It's the greatest thing in the world. And you want to know old enthusiasm, and there's great old enthusiasts here.

Because it's overcoming what is, you know, it's very easy to get cynical and bitter than old age. But there's that great verse in Corinthians which says that even though outwardly we're fading away, inwardly we're being renewed day by day.

There's an inner youthfulness in lots of the older people here. So are the young, that's why we don't just do stuff that's generationally tight.

[31 : 50] That's why the house, the city groups are so great because they're multi-generational because it's important to get to know older people in your life. And it's great to do so.

And the older people, be examples of what God can do and the impossibilities of getting old to the young people and speak to them. And just share your faith with them.

And as a congregation we seek to honour old age, respect and value their words and their examples.

So I would encourage you, the younger people, to spend time with the golden generation here in St. Columbus. Because they're not always here.

I regret, Bill Anderson was in St. Columbus for four or five years when we first came. Because they asked for some help from our sister church in Bucleon.

[32 : 52] Bill, registered blind, not physically strong, was one of the volunteers. I'll go. I'll, here am I, Lord, send me. And he came here.

He was vital in the early days here. And times with him were rich and great. And I regret when he went back to his own home congregation just not spending more time with him and learning more

from him because he had such a robust faith.

And lastly and very briefly, courage as well. In verse 12, you know, give me now, he says, this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day, it may be that the Lord will be with me and I shall drive them out, just as the Lord had said.

Oh man, eighty-five years old and he's got the courage to take that land that God has gifted him.

And he's been kept through war and through wilderness.

It's not been an easy life for him. And it's not a council of, you know, a kind of life's easy, no problem. But the bigger the battle, he could see, the bigger the battle, the greater the opportunity to rely on God.

[33 : 58] And the deeper the impossibility, the more he could trust in his living God. And he knew that from past experiences in his life. He says that.

He didn't rely on circumstances and he didn't rely on feelings, however significant and they weren't, and how passionate he was. He relied on the living God and the courage that the living God gave him because he'd been with him right through his life.

And I can guarantee that that will be the case for all the older people here who've been Christians for a long time. Well, I've been Christian for maybe forty years. I can say that, that God has been true to his promises.

The failings have always been one-sided, always one-sided, never on God's side. And that should give us greater courage. Sadly, sometimes it doesn't, but it should.

Because we see in a different chapter, in chapter 17, a different tribe who, when they're given the land to take, they say, oh, the same thing.

[35 : 05] Oh, I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't know if we can go up. It's difficult. There's a lot of strong enemies in that place. Not sure if we can go.

They don't end up driving out their enemies. And so they end up weak and compromising, unfulfilled and broken because they lacked courage in the living God.

So pray for these things. Pray for these three things in your life, grace, discernment and courage.

And ask God to help you look with the eye of faith to see the impossibilities that you face every day.

And we all face impossibilities. I recognize the enemy that we need to overcome in our own heart and also in the world in which we live.

And live by faith and trust in the living God. And look with the eye of faith. So I'll finish with this story.

I hope I get this right. I'm terrible at telling stories that I've read in books because I never remember them properly.

[36 : 06] But this is about a shoe salesman who's sent by his company to a foreign country. It's quite an old one. He married Nod in his head. You could probably come up and tell it much better.

And when he gets there, he sees the condition of the country. And it was an old story, so he sent a cable back home, text for the young ones, saying, wire me some money to get me a train home.

Nobody wears shoes here. He's a shoe salesman. He's obviously a poor country. Nobody wears shoes. He's a dead end. There's no point in going. He just wants money to go back home.

And so the company sent out a second salesman. And he sends, when he arrives, he looks at the country and what he sees.

And he sends a cable back to the company saying, market is unlimited. No one has shoes. Send me all the shoes you can.

[37 : 14] Because he sees things differently. And so often we are negative and we give up because of what we think are the impossibilities of the situation we're in.

Nobody's going to believe. Nobody's going to accept. None of my friends will come to faith. None of them will believe. And we give up and we walk away. Or does it drive us towards the one who promises to break down the walls of impossibility in our lives and our hearts and promises to fulfill what we looked at this morning?

That he has a purpose and a plan that's absolutely being fulfilled and will end up with all of us as believers, if we are believers in the new heavens and the new earth with him.

If you're not a believer, then that's something that you must contemplate and must come to terms with the claims and the reality of Jesus Christ and what he says. So let's pray.

Father God, help us to live by faith, but not faith in faith, but a faith in God, which means we go and keep going to You with our weakness and our failure and with repentant hearts, seeking Your help and seeking Your grace and seeking Your newness and seeking Your pleasure in our lives.

[38 : 29] Help us to desire You more and to trust in You more and to know, even in these seemingly dull and dry and difficult passages of the Bible, that You're the God who is intimately involved in fulfilling Your promises as a generous and gracious God.

And may we understand that in our lives and put it to the test and not live in a rut of unbelief or discouragement or failure, but look to and live in that great relationship of faith with the Lord Jesus Christ and take an example from someone like Caleb or some of the great old Christians here in the church and know that God is true to His promises.

So may you in habit our lives and our hearts bless everyone tonight who's here, bless them as they go from here, maybe into difficult family situations or into isolation or into difficult work relationships and battles of doubt or struggle or fear or hearts that don't desire you or whatever struggles and difficulties we face, help all of us this evening to turn to You and to commune with You and to seek Your grace and help in our time of need.

For Jesus' sake, Amen.