

Joshua 1:7-9 God Will Be With You Wherever You Go! May 24, 2018 8th Grade Graduation

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God with strengthen you with His Word by His grace and peace through Jesus, your Savior. Amen.

God's words for this evening are from Joshua 1:7-9

This is Your Word heavenly Father. Please give us a strong faith in Your promises. Your Word is truth!

Dear People of God, especially students of the Trinity 2018 graduating class,

Have you ever had projects at school or home that seemed impossible to do? Perhaps you are trying to learn a new concept in math or some other subject and it isn't computing. Sometimes you can get help, but that doesn't always work. In frustration or discouragement, you prayed to God. (Why we don't do that right away is a mystery!) After prayer, with God's blessing you were able to do the impossible project or to learn the un-learnable. All of us have challenges in life, which God allows to keep us closer to Him.

Joshua, the leader appointed after Moses, can relate to our experiences. He was about to enter the land that God had promised to Abraham 500 years before! After all those years of waiting, God finally said: "It's time. I'm giving you this land!" But, the people of the land weren't giving up without a fight. They trusted and prayed to their false gods They had fortified cities with experienced fighters. Joshua and his young inexperienced troops were probably outnumbered 10 to 1 by their enemies. If the enemies weren't bad enough, the Israelites had already been unfaithful and rebellious in the wilderness. Joshua couldn't trust them in battle! God's order seemed impossible! But, He would teach Joshua that nothing is impossible with God. God told Joshua to be strong and to trust in Him. It's the same with us. God can accomplish many things for good through us because:

God will be with you wherever you go!

1. When God tells us to be strong, He makes us strong. The Bible is not just information; it is the power of God to help all believers! God makes promises to us to build our confidence in Him. Before Jesus sent out His 12 Apostles He promised them, "*All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth.... I am with you always to the end of the age.*" (Matthew 20:18, 20) They believed Him and went with His blessing! God also had a plan for the Apostle Paul. He converted Paul and then sent him all over the Roman empire to tell people about Jesus as the Savior. But, Paul had a "*thorn in his flesh*" whatever that was. Paul prayed that God would take it away. But God said: "*My grace is sufficient for you... my power is made perfect in weakness.*" Paul responded, "*I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*" (2 Cor. 12:9)

It is the same with all of us. When God challenges us with problems or difficulties, He allows these things to help us realize our need for Him. His power has no limits. When we are doing His will according to His Word, God will accomplish great things for His kingdom. That is what happened with Joshua. He followed God's plan against Jericho and God made the walls fall flat and gave the city for him to conquer. God showed Himself to be the true God not just to Israel but to all the nations.

2. God is with us with His powerful Word. God told Joshua, "*Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*" (v.8) God had had Moses write the first 5 books of the Bible. There were many lessons from the *book of the Law* for Joshua. He could learn about the devil's temptations of Adam and Eve, about living by faith like Abraham and Sarah, or about being faithful and forgiving like Joseph. Reading God's Word will also help us understand God's ways. And when trust God and seek to follow His will, when we put God first, God promises that good things will be accomplished. Jesus said, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.*" (Matthew 6:31)

Our religion classes are done, but don't stop reading the Bible. I want all of us to be like the person described in Psalm 1 who followed God's Word. *"He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."* (Psalms 1:3) God has just begun to teach you. His Word is not just about school, it's about your Christian faith and life. The Holy Spirit will bless you as His Word remains a part of your life, a guide for your actions, and an encouragement when you remember how much Jesus' loves and forgives you.

Our lives have obstacles every day. It may be health issues, people issues, or unexpected problems. The devil throws them all at us, hoping that we will give up our faith. He wants us to seek others besides God. But, like Joshua, we know better. God tells us: *"Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (Ephesians 6:10-11* That full armor of God is about Christ and His promises. The helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit (God's Word) and the belt of truth are some of the blessings that Christ has won for us.

That is what you will take with you wherever you go. Don't be discouraged. God can take huge obstacles and knock them down to a size so that even Joshua and his young fighters could handle. The walls of Jericho and fierce armies of Canaan were obstacles that humanly speaking Joshua should not have overcome. Yet, he believed God's promises to help and guide him and he won the victories. When Joshua neared the end of his life about 30 years later, he challenged the people to stay faithful to God. You might remember what he told them: *"Choose ... this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites.... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15)

Let us be like Joshua and the people and call on God to accomplish many good things. When we make Jesus' promises the focus of our faith, He will give us confidence to do His commands. God will bless our efforts to serve and honor Him. When God is with us, nothing shall be impossible!

I'll close with a hymn:

With the Lord begin your task; Jesus will direct it.
For His aid and counsel ask; Jesus will perfect it.
Ev'ry morn with Jesus rise, And, when day is ended,
In His name then close your eyes; Be to Him commended.

Let each day begin with prayer, Praise and adoration.
On the Lord cast ev'ry care; He is your Salvation.
Morning, evening, and at night Jesus will be near you,
Save you from the Tempter's might, With His presence cheer you. Amen.
(CW 478 or ELH 82)