



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS for the week of June 7, 2020

“Passing the Baton”

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Theme/concept

As the time of Moses’s death drew near, his primary concern was for the continued care of the people. Succession leaves a community vulnerable. The Lord—and Moses—had prepared Joshua for the role of leader. This message will look at how Moses passed the baton to Joshua (Numbers 11:28; Exodus 17:9ff, 24:13, 32:17). Neither Joshua nor any subsequent leader would have the full authority of Moses (27:20), but Joshua would provide spiritual consistency and continuity. Who is passing a baton to you? To whom are you passing a baton?

Application

Faithful leaders are always receiving and passing the baton of faith and faithfulness.

Reflections on the sermon

This sermon makes the analogy that our lives are like a relay race, where we run our leg of the race, then pass the baton on to someone in the next generations. Looking back at your notes from Sunday’s message, what insights did you gain about the challenge of passing the baton of faith to the next generations?

Setting

Moses is near the end of his life as the people are poised to enter the promised land. Looking back over his time of leadership, Moses is deeply concerned for their welfare. He sees them as sheep—lost without their shepherd to lead them. He can see their tendencies to wander, both literally and figuratively. His love, concern, and care for the nation has grown immensely, and after these 40 years, he understands the dangers they face. Who will take the staff of leadership?

Scripture

Numbers 27:12-23 New International Version (NIV)

¹² Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go up this mountain in the Abarim Range and see the land I have given the Israelites. ¹³ After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, ¹⁴ for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honor me as holy before their eyes.” (These were the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin.)

¹⁵ Moses said to the Lord, ¹⁶ “May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community ¹⁷ to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”

¹⁸ So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership,^[a] and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹ Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their

presence. ²⁰Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. ²¹He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.” ²²Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. ²³Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the Lord instructed through Moses.

Breaking down the Scripture

1. In Numbers 27:12-14, the Lord is referring back to Moses and Aaron’s failure at the waters of Meribah in Numbers 20:1-13. What do you remember about their failure? What was the consequence?
2. In verses 15-17, after God gives Moses the news of his own death, what is Moses’s foremost concern?
3. Numbers 27:18-21 describes the Lord’s choice of Joshua to succeed Moses. What do we know about Joshua from these passages: Exodus 17:9-14, 24:13, 33:11; Numbers 11:28, 13:1-14:45; 32:11; Deuteronomy 1:38, 31:1-8, 34:9?
4. How would you describe what is happening in the instructions given to Moses in Numbers 27:18-21?
5. Verses 22-23 record Moses’s response. Describe the actions Moses took in obedience to the Lord.

Going deeper

1. Thinking back to last week's sermon and Moses's failure at Meribah, what do you think is in Moses's mind as he considers the nation going forward without him?
2. In Numbers 27:15-17, Moses asks God to provide the people with a leader. How does "sheep without a shepherd" accurately describe Israel?
3. After reading through the verses describing Joshua above in "breaking down the Scripture," do you think he's prepared to lead Israel? Does he need something more, if he's to succeed Moses? What pressure does Joshua face?
4. What does Moses do to help undergird Joshua in his new role as Israel's leader?

Reflection questions

1. Where in the race are you? Are you about to pass the baton, or are you about to receive the baton? How is that so?
2. What are the challenges you are facing in regard to passing or receiving the baton? What are the stakes?

3. What next steps could you take to help ensure a successful handoff?

Closing prayer

Dear Lord,

I know life is kind of like a race. I'd just love to see the next generation be wildly successful, and I know that can only happen if you, Lord, are at the center. The chaos of today is still in your hands and under your sovereignty. Please help me remember that. And please also help me pass on my confidence in you to the next generation. Please forgive my "Meribahs," and don't let them affect others. Let people see you at the center of my life and circumstances. I praise you, and I pray you will remake me in this area.

In the matchless name of Jesus, amen!