

State of the Church Address

January 14, 2007

- More giving and More Services (Democratic)
- Focus on Community and Unity (Communist)
- Centrality of government (Republican)
- Under one Supreme Ruler (Monocracy)
- Desire to maximize potential and yield (Capitalist)
- Working for Each Individual Best and Highest Good (Individualist)
- Unified in a Common Good and a Common Mission (Socialist)

So...what are we?

- **We are a Living, Moving, Growing, Spiritual Organism based on God's love for us and Grace through Jesus Christ dying on the cross, Forgiveness, One God, Love, Community, and Unity.**
- **Given a Common Mission based not on our desires, strength, or wisdom but on God's plan and promises.**

Only God could make this work

Let's look at this example in the book of Numbers

✦ Numbers 13:1-2, 18-20, 25-14:4, 11,29-34

Israel had wandered in the desert after their Exodus from slavery in Egypt. For 40 years they were being shaped and learning to trust God. They had arrived at Kadesh...the southern boarder of Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham for God's people over 500 years earlier. It was to be a sign of God's faithfulness and forgiveness and their trusting obedience. What we find instead is that Israel had arrived at their God given goal and hope and turned away in fear.

1 God spoke to Moses: **2** "Send men to scout out the country of Canaan that I am giving to the People of Israel. Send one man from each ancestral tribe, each one a tried-and-true leader in the tribe."

18 Look the land over, see what it is like. Assess the people: Are they strong or weak? Are there few or many? **19** Observe the land: Is it pleasant or harsh? Describe the towns where they live: Are they open camps or fortified with walls? **20** And the soil: Is it fertile or

barren? Are there forests? And try to bring back a sample of the produce that grows there - this is the season for the first ripe grapes."

25 After forty days of scouting out the land, they returned home. **26** They presented themselves before Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation of the People of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They reported to the whole congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. **27** Then they told the story of their trip: **28** The only thing is that the people who live there are fierce, their cities are huge and well fortified. Worse yet, we saw descendants of the giant Anak. **29** Amalekites are spread out in the Negev; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites hold the hill country; and the Canaanites are established on the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan." **30** Caleb interrupted, called for silence before Moses and said, "Let's go up and take the land - now. We can do it." **31** But the others said, "We can't attack those people; they're way stronger than we are."

32 They spread scary rumors among the People of Israel. They said, "We scouted out the land from one end to the other - it's a land that swallows people whole. Everybody we saw was huge. **33** Why, we even saw the Nephilim giants (the Anak giants come from the Nephilim). Alongside them we felt like grasshoppers. And they looked down on us as if we were grasshoppers."

14:1 The whole community was in an uproar, wailing all night long. **2** All the People of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The entire community was in on it: "Why didn't we die in Egypt? Or in this wilderness? **3** Why has God brought us to this country to kill us? Our wives and children are about to become plunder. Why don't we just head back to Egypt? And right now!" **4** Soon they were all saying it to one another: "Let's pick a new leader; let's head back to Egypt."

11 God said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me like dirt? How long refuse to trust me? And with all these signs I've done among them! **29** ...- every one of you twenty years and older who was counted in the census, this whole generation of grumblers and grouchers. **30** Not one of you will enter the land and make your home there, the firmly and solemnly promised land, except for Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. **31** "Your children, the very ones that you said would be taken for plunder, I'll bring in to enjoy the land you rejected **32** while your corpses will be rotting in the wilderness. **33** These children of yours will live as shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, living with the fallout of your unfaithfulness until the last of your generation lies in the wilderness. **34** You scouted out the land for forty days; your punishment will be a year for each day, a forty-year sentence to serve for your sins - a long schooling in my displeasure."

- **Lesson of our ancestors...**

It is not ours to choose but to obey

If we were to put ourselves in the place of Israel, and I believe we can do that, – First of all we believe God has a purpose and a promise for this group of followers of Jesus here in La Paz. We have a God given goal and hope. We have prayed, fasted and waited in the last year for God to begin to reveal how we are to remain faithful to God. Not surprisingly, God answered... As Crossroads Christian Fellowship – We are given to share the living water of Jesus Christ with people thirsting for God. I believe we are standing on the borders of stepping over, of realizing God's goal for this group.

If we can learn anything from Israel – we can not forget what God has asked us to do - living that out will be a God sized task...one that only God can do and God will do it in and through us as trusting, obedient, loving servants.

As we look over to what God wants to do we will see there are Giants waiting to swallow us up, there is an unknown territory that is intimidating, and there are fortified people and places God will ask us to enter in his name and for his Kingdom --

- The women will be stepping boldly into new studies and ways of reaching other women for Christ.
- We will set out to help a small family have a home that is safe in the storms.
- Our efforts to disciple will yield men who desire to honor and serve God in ways they would not have before, some will become leaders because God has called them.
- We will meet new people and new needs, we will continue to make ourselves available to help people struggling in their lives, marriages, relationships, and faith.
- Our worship team will continue to push themselves into new ways of leading us in worship through music.
- We will pray for, visit, and anoint the sick in the name of Jesus; we will clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and invite strangers.
- I believe that God's wants La Paz and that is a task only God can do...but God is going to use US to do it.

Every one of these places where we are offering waters of life can represent a giant, an intimidating unfamiliar, unexplored territory, a stronghold of the enemy of God. Each one of them can be a fortress against us.

What will we do? Will we decide to stay here? Protected, safe, secure and just a few steps away from truly knowing the great are the promises and blessings of God for his people when they completely trust him. Each one of us must step up to God's call, God's purposes in our life...and step into it trusting we will not lose or be overcome. God will give us all the courage, wisdom, and strength as we need it.

Israel's experience was quite clear –

At the end of chapter 14 a bunch of people decided to go ahead and go into the promised land after failing to trust God- Moses told them not to go because of their rebellion and disobedience the Lord was not with them. They went anyway and were pummeled and beaten back easily. They tried to do it on their own.

This lesson is equally true for us. While we can not forget what God has asked us to do we can not do anything on our own...but only obediently, with God in the lead. Jesus said it like this Apart from me you can do nothing.

A generation passed, all the people who desired to return to Egypt and to slavery died in the desert and their children came again to the same place. This is what happened...in Joshua 1 and 2

All the land from the desert in the south to Lebanon in the north will be yours. All the land from the great river, the Euphrates, in the east, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west will be yours, too, including the land of the Hittites. **5** No one will be able to defeat you all your life. Just as I was with Moses, so **I will be with you. I will not leave you or forget you.** **6** "Joshua, be strong and brave! You must lead these people so they can take the land that I promised their fathers I would give them. **7** Be strong and brave. Be sure to obey all the teachings my servant Moses gave you. If you follow them exactly, you will be successful in everything you do. **8** Always remember what is written in the Book of the Teachings. Study it day and night to be sure to obey everything that is written there. If you do this, you will be wise and successful in everything. **9** Remember that I commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't be afraid, because the Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go."

God reminded Joshua that he would not go alone. He also gave him a map of sorts – and for us we have the Bible to study for wisdom and success for Christ. Our efforts to disciple are aimed at helping the thirsty grow and become trusting followers and leaders.

Here is the often overlooked

Joshua 2:9-11

She (Rahab) said to them, "I know the Lord has given this land to your people. You frighten us very much. Everyone living in this land is terribly afraid of you **10** because we have heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea when you came out of Egypt. We have heard how you destroyed Sihon and Og, two Amorite kings who lived east of the Jordan. **11** When we heard this, we were very frightened. Now our men are afraid to fight you because the Lord your God rules the heavens above and the earth below!"

We need not fear where God wants to go...God is way out ahead of Israel preparing the way, they just had to learn to see it the hard way

At the beginning of 2007, as we consider all God has done and what God is calling us to do – we must be strong and brave. We can not allow our eyes to fall on the giants and the unknown but of our God who goes ahead of us. Ours is not to decide weather or not to go where the Lord calls us but to be trusting and obedient regardless of the obstacles and our fears. The same is true for each of us in our own service of God, in our marriages, and with our struggles.

God promised **Don't be afraid, because the Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go.** I say, let's go. Lets follow, trusting God's leading. Let's enter the land he is giving for his glory and not be found to be fearful, lacking trust and faith.