

"THE CAGE OF FEAR"  
Joshua 1:1-9

Today we conclude our six part series where we have been seeking to chase what the 5<sup>th</sup> century Celtic Christians- those Christians over in Britain, Ireland and Scotland, called the Holy Spirit. But in their Gaelic tongue it came out *An Geadh-Glas* or Wild Goose. For the benefit of those who might be new to this series the first Sunday we talked about the Cage of Responsibility; the second Sunday the Cage of Routine; the third Sunday the Cage of Assumptions; the fourth Sunday we focus on the Cage of Guilt, last Sunday the Cage of Failure, and today we are working on breaking out of the Cage of Fear.

5-year old Johnny was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone. "It's dark in there and I'm scared." She asked again, and he persisted. Finally she said, "It's OK Jesus will be in there with you." Johnny walked hesitantly to the door and slowly opened it.

He peeked inside, saw that it was dark, and started to leave when all at once an idea came, and he said: "Jesus, if you're in there, would you please hand me that can of tomato soup?"

Fear- on Tuesday of this week Chet Conklin experienced a fear that I pray none of you ever experience- Chet would you briefly share what happened...

Let me ask you to ponder **for a moment a fear or fears that you have or have had, can you name one or two?** Maybe it is the fear of losing something- from a game to family heirloom; maybe it is a fear of swimming or speaking in public or... you fill in the blank. Researchers have proven that when a person lost in a computer-simulated game the rise in medial frontal negativity was larger than the rise in medial frontal positivity after a win. So boiling it all down, the researchers proved that we fear loss more than we love gain.

And so too many people live their lives defensively and maybe too many of us do not even take that step forward to chase the Wild Goose all because we get trapped in the cage of fear. And what happens is we stop short of pursuing God with any form of passion and we miss out on the adventures that God has waiting for us. Folks, as I get older I am coming to the conclusion that God never wanted us to play defense with our lives but rather be proactive and be on the offense, moving forward.

I want to share three things with you today as it relates to breaking out of the Cage of Fear. First, **Courageous Living Sees the Battle in Front of You (vs. 1-5)**. We read in our passage today from Joshua 1:1-5 that servant of the Lord, Moses, has died. For lo, these many years the man, who was a second lieutenant to Moses, Joshua, has been serving the so called, General, Moses. And it was probably intimidating serving this great spiritual leader. And he had been doing it for forty years. But now Moses is dead and the mantle has been passed on to Joshua. Talk about big shoes to

fill. So now they are ready to cross over the Jordan and go into the land that, verse 2 says, "cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites." Great, there is the land, right over there but guess what? There are still battles to be waged in taking over the land. Battles- fighting, bloodshed, loss of lives, casualties, the enemy. And even though God says to Joshua in verse 5, "No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life" just by virtue of the fact that no one will be able to stand against you there will be those who will try. The land is promised but there is hard work and warring to take it over because there are these Canaanites who are living there and the Israelites have to put them out and defeat them. See the battle in front of you.

Think of it this way, God has promised the world to the followers of Jesus Christ, but there is a piece we have to come to terms with- there is this work of taking it, the world, that is.

And if we are going to be Christ's followers who are trying to win the world for Him then there is work to be done and we will not make any ground if we stay in our comfort zones, if we play it safe.

Think about this thought- there is nothing passive about being a part of the kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, faithfulness is not holding down the fort but rather it is storming the gates of hell.

In the book we have been reading, *Wild Goose Chase*, by Pastor Mark Batterson, he shares this story that I want to pass on to you. He writes, "I've been inspired by a group of early-twentieth-century missionaries who became known as 'one-way missionaries' because they packed all their earthly belongings into coffins and purchased one way tickets when they departed for the mission field. They knew they'd never return home. The story is told of one such missionary named A. W. Milne who felt called to a tribe of headhunters in the New Hebrides. All the other missionaries to this tribe had been martyred, but that didn't keep Milne from chasing the Wild

Goose. He lived among the tribe for thirty-five years and never returned home. When the tribe buried him, they wrote the following epitaph on his tombstone: "When he came there was no light. When he left there was no darkness." (p. 149) Folks, I am afraid that we have become too comfortable and complacent in the American church. When I read the stories that come out of other countries around the world and the sacrifices that people make for the Gospel of Christ I am ashamed, I am ashamed. Since when did we read in the Bible where God wants to send us to safe places, that God wants us to only do easy things? When are we going to venture out of our comfort zones and do something that "pushes the envelope" as it comes to our faith, or our own personal ministry or even the ministry of churches and our church? If we chase the Wild Goose, God will lead us into places we have never gone or thought of, and we might even find ourselves in places where light and darkness clash head on.

Second, **Courageous Living Depends on God's Promises. (6-8).**

Look again with me at verses 6-8 where it says, "Be strong and courageous: for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful." My friends, the Word of God challenges us to be on the offensive. And when you read the Bible we read of people who welcomed the promises of God and acted on them. For they had a history with God who had done for them in the past and it was those past experiences that they had to reflect on which lead them forward in the present.

This is Stewardship Sunday where we kick-off the fall Stewardship Campaign. These are difficult, uncertain economic times and yet the church and the work of Christ go on. Members and friends will be receiving a mailing this week asking you to prayerfully consider your 2010 pledge. The ironic thing is that it is a proven fact that in tough economic times that giving in the church increases because people are re-evaluating their spending as well as willing to step out in faith and give. God makes promises throughout scripture and He keeps His. We, on the other hand, need to receive God's promises in scripture and step out in faith whether it be related to our own personal stewardship or breaking out of the cage of fear.

And third, **Courageous Living is Fueled by the Presence of God.**

Folks, do you really think Joshua came by his courage naturally? Let me ask you are you naturally courageous? It was God's presence in the room with Chet and the robber that was the source of true courage for Chet on

Tuesday. And God's presence can be, for us, the source of true courage.

Friends, if you think about it there is no such thing as "failure" when it comes to following Christ. And if we are going to be passive when it comes to our Christian faith, then I have to wonder if it means we are willing to settle for disobedient living rather than obedient living.

Folks, here is what I think a persecuted Chinese Christian who has had to go underground to worship because they have said YES to Jesus Christ might say to us. (quote) "American, Western Christians: most of you are far too tentative when it comes to the will of God. You let your fears dictate your decisions. You are so afraid of making the wrong decision that you make no decision at all. It is your indecision, not your bad decisions that keep you in the cage. You know the old adage- 'nothing ventured, nothing gained.' What is lacking in the church of Jesus Christ today is not education or resources. Now don't get me wrong, you should keep doing both, for you Americans are the most resourced church in the most resourced country the

world has ever known. But do you know what is lacking, my American friends? What you say, good old-fashioned guts. The Church of Jesus Christ needs people who are more afraid of missing opportunities than making mistakes; people who are more afraid of lifelong regrets than temporary failure; people who dare to dream the unthinkable and attempt the impossible. For you, my American Christian friends, that's what chasing the Wild Goose is all about." (end of quote) Chase the Wild Goose. Break out of the Cage of Fear and live for Christ. Amen.

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Introduction: Fear...

Ponder for a moment a fear or fears that you have or have had...

Researchers have proved that we fear loss more than we love gain

Three things related to breaking out of the Cage of Fear

First, **courageous living sees the \_\_\_\_\_ in front of you**  
(vs. 1-5)

God has promised the world to the followers of Jesus Christ, but there is the work of taking the world

There is nothing \_\_\_\_\_ about being part of the Kingdom of God

Early twentieth century missionaries known as "one-way missionaries

Second, **courageous living depends on God's \_\_\_\_\_** (vs. 6-8)  
The Word of God challenges us to be on the offensive

This is Stewardship Sunday...

Third, **courageous living is fueled by the \_\_\_\_\_ of God**  
(vs. 9)

Do you really think Joshua came by his courage naturally?

There is no such thing as "failure" when it comes to following Christ

Conclusion: What a persecuted Chinese Christian might say to us....