

Joshua 13:1-7; 19.49-51

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[0 : 0 0] My name is Tim. I'm part of the team here at Harvest Church. We're going to be looking at the Bible together. If you've got a Bible with you, I'm going to fix a couple of places. I'll help you to have a paper Bible with you if you can.

We're going to start in Joshua chapter 13. Actually, if you don't have a paper Bible and you want one, there's some on the welcome table. Please just go get one. You can keep that. That will help you.

So we've been pitching through Joshua for a few weeks now. And we've reached, I guess we've reached the second half. They fought a number of large battles.

And it's time now for the land that they've won to be divided amongst the various tribes of the people of Israel. And that actually takes quite a lot of Joshua.

There's seven whole chapters of essentially lists of places, which is what I give myself to preach on today. And you're thinking, gosh, it's hot. I don't know how long Tim normally is.

[1 : 0 2] He's given himself seven chapters. I mean, hopefully, don't worry too much. But the question I'd like us to be thinking about, what I'm actually going to do is I'm going to read the very beginning. We're going to read one little section in the middle.

We're going to read the very end. I'm not going to read really most of those lists of places. There is great riches in them that we could squeeze out and consider. But the question I'd like us to sort of approach it with is, okay, they were told to take the land.

And for this people, that meant physical places in a physical part of the Middle East. What does it mean for us? Because God's command to you is not go and take a small portion of land somewhere near Jerusalem.

So what does it mean to us? Let me start. So I'm going to read the first part of Joshua chapter 13. Now Joshua was old and advanced in years.

And the Lord said to him, you are old and advanced in years. It doesn't mince his words. And there remains yet very much land to possess. Or no.

[2 : 0 4] This is the land that yet remains. All the regions of the Philistines and all those of the Gesherites from the Shihor, which is east of Egypt, northward to the boundary of Ekron. It is counted as Canaanite.

There were also five rulers of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashcolon, Gath, and Ekron. And those of the Avim. In the south, all the land of the Canaanites and Mira that belongs to the Sidonians, to Afek, to the boundary of the Amorites and the land of the Gebelites and all Lebanon towards the sunrise from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Mishraphoth, Maine, even all the Sidonians. I myself will drive them out from before the people of Israel.

Only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance as I have commanded you. Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.

This is the word of the Lord. So there's a measure of urgency to what the Lord is saying. He says, Joshua, you're old.

[3 : 1 6] I was old at the start. I think by this point he's about 85. And there's all these places, and he starts to list them, that you have not yet taken, that were in the allotment that God gave to the people of Israel.

They've taken, as it were, the highlands, but not the coast. Now, and so there's this sort of sense of urgency. You need to go and do the thing that I have told you to do.

But clearly you're old, so you're not going to achieve it yourself. That's the tone of what God's saying. And so then he says, so portion it out to the various tribes so that they will go and finish the

job.

And when you might think there are 12 tribes of Israel, it says nine and a half, because there are, is that up? Yeah, two and a half tribes that have already had their allotment on the other side of the Jordan. You can read about that in the book of Numbers.

And you also, if you know your Bible, might know that for all I'm saying, it's quite urgent. He's being told, pass it on. People need to go and do this work.

[4 : 19] It didn't finally happen until the time of David, which is some hundreds of years later. But because the land is God's and belongs to him, it can be allotted before it is possessed, as in he can say, this belongs to you, even though someone else is living there.

And then they can go and do the work that God has told them to do. Now, my key question as we go through this, I'm going to move on and read another couple of sections from this actually very long series of places.

My key question is, what does this mean to us? It might, as I read some of it, raise questions for you about the modern state of Israel, particularly because they use some of these chapters to say that this is the land that they should hold.

I'm not going to try and answer those today, but there's a very helpful podcast done by another pastor in our movement. His name is Gates, no, Adrian Burks. They're passing down in the southwest that will stick out on an email this week that might help you think some of that through if you're interested in that question.

But what happens next over the next few chapters is Judah and half the tribe of Joseph are given their allotments. And then we get to chapter 18.

[5 : 31] If you want to turn there with me, I'm just going to read the first two verses here. So a tribe and a half had their allotments. And that says, And then the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there.

The land lay subdued before them. They remained among the people of Israel, seven tribes whose inheritance had not been appointed.

And then Joshua moves on to do that over the next chapter or so. So he gives out one tribe and a half, and then they take themselves to a place called Shiloh, and they set up the tent of meeting.

This is what sometimes called the tabernacle. It's the place of the worship of God before they later build the temple. So it's the tent where you worship God. It's God's presence.

And from the tent, they then start to say to each tribe, Okay, that part of the country, go and live there. I'm just now going to turn to the very end of this section.

[6 : 31] So the very end of chapter 19, the last verse, the last couple of sentences. So in between what we have is lots of lists of places.

So these are the inheritances that Eliezer, the priest, and Joshua, the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel, distributed by lot at Shiloh before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting, so they finish dividing the land.

What do we notice? We notice that God is the one who says he will drive out peoples before them. We notice that in chapter 18, God could say, All the land lay subdued before them.

And you might think, Well, they haven't, we just heard they haven't conquered it. Why can they say that? Because they've set up the place of the presence of God, and therefore the land lay subdued before him, because it belongs to him.

God has traveled with them and is dwelling in the land with them. And in fact, that's the point.

[7 : 41] That's the point of the things that they were asked to do. It wasn't so much that God just took his fancy and said, Go and live over there. The whole purpose of what they were doing was to devote this place to the worship of God, which is why it's important to notice that it's from the tabernacle is the place that they start to say, You're going to go over there, and you're going to go over there, and you're going to go over there.

Because it's from worship that they then go and take the land, that they then go and do the thing that God has asked them to do. So what does that mean for us?

Well, their primary mission, the people of Israel at this point in history, was to worship God, as in to declare his rule and reign in this particular place they've been sent to.

For those of us who follow Jesus, that's our primary mission too, to worship God and to declare his rule and reign in the places that we find ourselves.

And they have Joshua stood there, and they have the high priest stood there, and it's saying, Okay, you go over there and do this bit of mission.

[8 : 53] You go over there and do this bit of mission. And for us as Christians, Jesus fills both positions. He has the same name as Joshua, and he is the one who takes the land, as we'll get to. And he's also, we're told, in the New Testament, our great high priest.

So he is handing to us all mission that he gives us from a place of worship. He is the one who gifts us the land, whatever that is for us.

Why is that important? Because in a minute, I'm going to tell us we need to go and do some things in faith. But before we get to that, we have to notice that all the things that we do in faith come from the cross. That it's that Jesus would die on our behalf to gift us mission.

To say, Come and participate in all that I'm doing in the world. It's from a place of worship that he starts to say, Come and do. Come along with me. Worship is the reason for the conquest.

That might make us uncomfortable, but the Bible's pretty consistent in that. Worship is the reason for the conquest. We might want to think, Why couldn't it be anywhere? Why did they have to go to this place in order to worship God?

[10 : 02] To give a very simple answer, partly because that's what God had promised Abraham, that he'd said, This is your land. Come to it, and you'll worship me there.

But also because God prescribes his means of worship. God is the one who is able to say, Worship me there. In one sense, that's the same for us today in the church. God tells us how to worship in the Bible.

We can't just do whatever we like. What we do on a Sunday is relatively prescribed by the Bible. It tells us how to do it. We worship in the way that God teaches us to, because that's how he wants to be worshipped.

But there's also, before I get to it, what is taking the land for us? There's an important pattern here, which is, it starts in worship.

It starts, as it were, in the church. It was the same for them. It started in the tent of meeting. It's the church. Then we go and do things in the world. We, the church, if you like, is our pattern for how to live.

[11 : 04] The worship that God has given us, gathered worship on a Sunday, is supposed to have in it a sense of a pattern for how you go and live your life in the rest of the world.

And it works a little bit like God's handed his, like, well, here's the script for gathered worship. He's handed it to us. And then what you do in the rest of your life is you're like, well, the script doesn't quite fit the situation I've got in front of me, but I can improvise around it.

But if you get a bunch of gifted actors and they know a play really well, and then you shove in some random people, you know, a couple of you wander onto stage and start sort of chatting away and interrupting their lines, they might keep on going around you, or if they're very gifted, that they might be like, well, I know this play very well, so I'm going to sort of improvise around this random interloper who's come and stood in front of me.

They're saying things, they're not saying the right lines, but I know where we're going, I know what the story is, and so I can get us there. Life is a little bit like that. If what we get from God in the Bible and indeed in worship on a Sunday is a kind of, oh, here's a script, you then go back to life and you're like, I'm reading a situation that I think if I leave through the Bible, I don't know that I'm going to find this.

What do I do? And the thing is, you've learned so well the script that you're like, well, I can kind of, I know the story, so I can sort of improvise around it. I know what's good, I know what's wise, I can work my way through.

[12 : 27] So we start in gathered worship and we go to whatever it is that the Lord has called us to do in the world. But, and the Lord said that everything was subdued before them.

Read that in the start of chapter 18. They set up the tent of meeting and the land lay subdued before them. And yet, they had to do something.

They were not in possession of much of it. They needed to follow through and actually do something. They had to take the land. It's often the same for us.

God calls us to exploits, he calls us to do things for his kingdom and he will talk to us like I have subdued the land and it's true, spiritually. But you, if we just sit there and sort of stand there with our hands in our pockets and think, well great, God's done it, nothing will happen.

You have to walk into whatever it is he's asked you to do. You have to actually move your feet, move your arms, move your mouth to do whatever the thing is that we're talking about. And sometimes even, and this seems surprising, there can be a level of, well actually I need to take hold of this thing with active faith or maybe it won't quite happen the way that I feel the Lord has said it will.

[13 : 57] Now I didn't read all the way through these various places but if we did, what we might notice is that many of these tribes are given a place and then another tribe is given the same place.

Jerusalem is given to both Judah and to Benjamin. It's really interesting if you know the story of the Bible and who becomes a king and then who becomes a king but we'll put that aside for now.

Ziklag and Beersheba are given to Judah and Simeon and there are lots more like that where places it's like, oh this tribe can have it and then, oh no, this tribe can have it. What was going to happen? Genuinely, whoever got there first was going to get it and that can seem odd to us because we're like, sure, there's not competition in the kingdom but, and I'm, no, I'm not sure there is but, there is this thing that, well they had to take the Lord's promise with active faith and the one who gets there would get it and it's, for Jerusalem for example, it's David, King David who takes Jerusalem.

He's from the tribe of Judah. There's already been a king in the land before him who says sometime after this, King Saul's from the tribe of Benjamin. He doesn't take Jerusalem. Probably could have done. So we have to take hold of the Lord's promises with active faith.

What do I mean by that? Let me read you a story from history. So Niccolo Polo who is the father of the famous Marco Polo, some of you will have, some of you will just know the game that you play in the swimming pool but some of you will have heard of him.

[15 : 32] He, Marco Polo, he sort of travelled around the world and wrote about it in the Middle Ages. His father was a merchant of Venice who longed to get his hands on the vast wealth of the East.

So he's wanting to go East towards China and he's aware there are things there that are worth a lot of money back in Europe. And he travelled halfway around the world become one of the first white men to stand at the court of a Chinese emperor and he received a stunning invitation from him.

The emperor, Kublai Khan, had heard about a man called Jesus Christ who was God and asked for a hundred of this Jesus Christ followers to come and preach his message to the Chinese.

He asked Niccolo Polo to do that and he said if Niccolo Polo could bring back a hundred missionaries from Europe the emperor promised that he and his subjects would follow Jesus.

Now what we make of that promise I don't know. But sadly what happened next is that Europe's Christians probably had a lot less ambition for Jesus and his mission than Niccolo Polo did for money.

[16 : 43] It took him two years to talk it over when he came back because it takes a very long time to travel these distances that's not completely crazy. And when they did so they could muster up two missionaries to go with him not the hundred that had been asked for.

Both of them deserted Niccolo Polo en route back to China due to the hardships of the journey and their increasing fear of preaching Christ in a pagan land.

It was 600 years later that Hudson Taylor arrives in China to preach the gospel. and very hard work for him but birthed something that is now a fast growing though oft persecuted movement of Christians in that nation.

Who knows what might have happened if 600 years earlier 100 people had been brave enough to go I don't know if the emperor was telling the truth but if he was who knows.

Now on the one hand we're like well God is sovereign and so God knows what's going to happen absolutely. and yet it does seem like often we have to take hold of the thing in front of us with active faith.

[17 : 52] Does the Lord know if we're going to or not? Yeah. But do we still from our point of view do you still have to do it? Yeah. What I would want to encourage you to do today on this very hot sticky morning is to not settle for any less than God has given us.

We're called as a people to take the land. What does that mean? It does mean evangelism. It does mean telling people that you know about Jesus so that they too can join his people.

It does mean that. It does mean church planting like Vinnie and Diana have planted a church in North Portugal or like you know you might go far to the end of the earth to plant churches you might

go to the end of the street but it does mean planting churches our land doesn't have enough of them.

It also means personal transformation. It might be for you the land that the Lord is calling you to take right now is actually kind of inside your own heart that there's a thing from the past that you're struggling with.

Or some way someone wounded you that needs to be dealt with and he is calling you to take that land for me that land inside yourself. It might be that the Lord is calling you to do something for the kingdom in business.

[19 : 20] Perhaps go deliberately think I'm going to set up a business that's going to run on kingdom practices because that's going to bless people and its employees. It's going to be better than what the world can offer. Yeah. Or even I've got a friend who is very successful in business and he feels like a thing written over his life is I want to make millions and then give them away.

So that's a kingdom mindset. He's working very hard in business so he can get very generous so he can give away enormous amounts of money. It might be that you want your household to look like the kingdom.

It might look small to everyone else the stuff that you're working on but it is land to take for Jesus. there are many more things besides that I could mention but he is calling us to take land by which I mean to have an effect in our own lives and in the kind of world around us and the places that we can touch.

And I'd also encourage us in that to note Joshua's age. It's not something you retire from taking the land. Does your life look different as your body grows more and more tired?

Yeah, of course. And in fact, particularly, there comes a point where the most helpful thing you can do for the kingdom is help and encourage and deliberately mentor those who are younger than you. Absolutely. But it's not like it's a thing that we all do, all ages, all generations joining in on kingdom work together.

[20 : 45] I'd like to tell a story about a friend of mine called Matt who I think really exemplifies trying to take land for the kingdom. And he was a primary school teacher and he got to know a guy called Eddie who got saved.

I think he actually saved because of the first New Day when we were in Nottingham. So he was just a guy living in the town. Thousands of young people have come into Nottingham to come preach and tell people the gospel and help tidy up gardens and all sorts of other useful things.

Eddie got to know Jesus. He joined our church in Nottingham. And he was from a very difficult background, so discipling him was challenging. It's just like a lot of stuff to undo.

And Matt became friends with Eddie and Matt was like, I want to help Eddie more than I'm able to. And so why? Eddie doesn't have a job. And he's going to be really, like he needs a job. How about I quit teaching and start a business so I can give Eddie a job?

So he did. Started a gardening business almost entirely because he wanted to employ Eddie. And he, and then it meant that they could be alongside each other all day.

[21 : 49] That he could just, just do work together and just talk to him about what it was like following Jesus and how that was going to work. And then he did that over many, many years for multiple young people.

He would usually have one, occasionally two person working with him at time. He just, he tidied people's gardens. Primarily from his point of view, yeah, sure, it was a business and he made money and he was able to pay for his family and allow his kids to eat food and all these wonderful things and pay the person working with him.

But from his point of view, primarily so that he could disciple the young guy he was working with. And then Matt reached a point where he was like, I am really frustrated with this because I can only do one person at a time. And so he, because Matt's mad, thought, I need to set up a different business, don't I?

So he went to the church and asked for some help and the church provided a bit of seed money. And Matt set up eventually something called Radiant Cleaners, a cleaning business. They picked cleaning mostly because it was a really easy way to help people.

It was a job that people, you need to work with someone else, you could do it in commercial buildings. And with a deliberate aim of not just discipling people but thinking, what I really want to do, what I know, what he noticed was, what changed Eddie's life particularly was getting a job.

[23 : 01] He's like, I want to employ people who don't have work. So he set up a business deliberately aiming at employing people who don't have work, perhaps who've never worked. Lots of people in that city have never worked in their whole lives.

And he would just say, have a job. So you can imagine lots of them really struggled with that. Lots of people, lots of difficult things in that business. But his whole aim was, I want to employ people to show them the love of Jesus because I think this is the kingdom way to be.

That business has won a lot of awards these days. The business is very successful. And he continually employs people who've never worked before in their lives. And he thinks it's a success when they leave because they get a job somewhere else.

And he employs someone else who's never had a job and helps them through. And Matt is still like, it's not enough. I mean, these days he runs a marquee business, he runs a bakery. I think if you go on East Midlands trains, you can eat biscuits baked by people who never worked before that Matt's up a baker.

But Matt's mindset is, I'm going to take the land. He doesn't seem to understand that things might not be possible. And he gets a dream from the Lord and he's like, well, let's make it happen. And he goes for it.

[24 : 08] He's a man of faith. And he would tell the story, the whole thing about the dignity of work, but particularly about just about loving people like Jesus would. They put discipleship stuff alongside it.

The church has managed to end to end it. So someone comes in from the food bank and they're like, oh, I can't really get a food because I have a job. And they're like, well, we can help with that. And they get a job. And on they go. Matt is a man of faith.

That's what Hudson Taylor was a man of faith. They're doing very different things for the kingdom, but of great value. Take the land. What's the question for you?

What's God calling you to? He's probably calling you to many of those things because some of the things I mentioned are just stuff Christians should do. But what's he calling you to? And right now you're thinking to get out of here and sit in front of the open door of the freezer, sure.

But don't let that question filter away in this little bit of heart. What is he calling you to? What is he calling you to?

[25 : 15] And the final thing, and you'll start at a very short point, but the final thing we need to know is it's from worship that we take the land. Jesus says, take the land. But it's actually Jesus who first takes the land for us.

And we know that because one day the Lord will conquer the earth. In 1 Corinthians 15, it says, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. Hallelujah.

The firstborn of those who fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all dies, but also in Christ shall all be made alive.

But each in his own order. Christ the firstfruits, then it is coming those who belong to Christ. We're talking about the resurrection, the fact that all those who follow Jesus will be raised from the dead on that great day. Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Jesus will take the land.

[26 : 20] He will destroy every enemy of his father. Now for him, these are not primarily physical. These are the spiritual powers opposed to the rule of God and then death itself. He's going to take the land.

He's told you he's going to. Much like God can say, the land is subdued but they haven't done it.

He's told you he's going to because their back is broken on the cross and his foot is coming down so that on that great day everything that opposes him will be thrown into the lake of fire.

He will rule the land. His enemies will be his footstool and he will conquer. That's important because it's the reason that we can have courage to say I'm going to take the land too.

Because Jesus has gone before us. That's good news. What we're going to do now is the band are going to come. We're going to sing to worship Jesus.

This one is taken on our behalf but also calls us to come and participate in all that he's done for us. he goes with us. He goes before us.

[27 : 24] Why don't we stand together if you're able. I'm going to pray and then we'll sing. Lord Jesus, would you speak with us?

Would you show us where we've got comfortable? Would you show us where we need to go and do exploits for your kingdom? Would you even as we sing and keep worshipping and finish off our meeting, would you start to speak to someone in the room about where you are calling them to and what you're calling them to?

What exploits do you want them to take? They might look grand to all of us. The kind of story I told about my friend Matt. They might actually look small to someone else but they are just as difficult fighting inside their own heart or in their own household.

But we trust you when you say you've gone ahead of us. We trust you when you say you're the one who will conquer the land on our behalf. And we trust you that you, because it brings you pleasure, are inviting us to participate in your mission.

Everything is subdued before you. You are ruler of all things. And we're delighted to do your work. Amen. Let's worship him.

[28 : 40] Amen.