

The Whole Story: Numbers

13-14: Fear or Faith

I'd like to welcome you all across the Triangle at all of our campuses to The Summit Church! It's an incredible weekend and I am thankful to be able to open up God's word with you today.

As you heard Pastor JD say, we're in a series right now called "The Whole Story" where we're looking all the way through Scripture (beginning to end), and we've also got a great bible reading plan you've been hearing about that goes along with it.

Personally enjoying the Bible Reading Plan....

That's where we will pick up this weekend, from the book of Numbers. We'll spend our time focusing primarily in Numbers 13-14. But before we jump there, I've got to set the stage for you. Buckle Up.....

- The book of Numbers is set soon after the Exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt.
 - **We remember what happened in Egypt right?**
 - Let me just give you a quick refresher.

- **Egypt was hell on earth. Plain and simple.**
- 400 years of slavery and death
- There were two stories running parallel in Egypt....A story of Slavery and a story of Hope.
- The reason there is a story of hope running parallel with the story of slavery is because in Genesis 15, God told Abram that his people would live in a land that was GOOD (and Egypt was looking too good), but the only thing was that it would not happen until 400 years of slavery in a land that was not their own where they would be mistreated (Check!),
 - So the people that have been holding on to that promise (*God will deliver us, hold our captors accountable, and put us into a land that is GOOD*) are FREED from the wretched hands of Pharaoh in Egypt.
 - They set out on their freedom journey, and they encounter an obstacle...the red sea
 - That's where God shows off his glory and his unwavering commitment to his people
 - He makes that water split to the left and to the right
 - The people walk across dry land to the other side

- Their enemies give chase
 - God swallows them up in the sea
- If you're keeping score right now, God is really running up the scoreboard.
 - He's pulling an Oregon on the Dookies (droppin that 3 in their face with 10 seconds left...up by 15)
- The people of God are finally free, after 400 years of slavery. THEY. ARE. PUMPED!

The book of Numbers picks up in the beginning of year 2 POST EGYPT. Moses, the leader of God's people has been given a job. It's a bit of a doozy, to be honest, but it's something that has to be done.

We've got to COUNT all these people, ORGANIZE them for the journey, and POINT them to the presence and promises of God along the way.

It's like organizing a herd of middle schoolers jacked up on Red Bull. These people are pumped. They're ready to get to the land that God has promised, but there's some work that needs to be done and some ordinances that need to be followed until they get there. So, Moses gets to work!

- The first 10 chapters of numbers are full of excitement and things seem to be going really well.
 - Moses counts the people (600k men ~ 2million total)
 - Gives each tribe a duty/responsibility

- Tabernacle is set up right in the middle of the people to show them that God Is going to give them direction every step of the way by his leading, as evidenced by a Cloud of Smoke by Day and a Pillar of Fire by night..
- **Where God leads, the people follow.**
- that should have been the story of the people of Israel...and it should be the story of us TODAY. *But we all know how that song and dance goes, right???*
- Then, Numbers 11-12 hits and the game changes.
- The people start complaining more and more. Listen, it's not just the people far down the ladder that are complaining....some of Moses top leaders and friends are complaining.. his own family! Miriam and A-Aron are turning against him!
- **Moses is like...God, let's get this show on the road, these people are KILLING ME and I've pleaded with you not to do the same to them.**
- **After a few series of events, the people set about on the final leg of the journey....which is where we pick up here in Numbers 13.**

Let's Read together:

"The Lord said to Moses "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe, send one of it's leaders..."

(CAMPING TRIP!!!)

v.17: When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said “Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwallied or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees on it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.”

(Bring me back a REPORT)...so the people of Israel waited with anticipation.....

So, they went up and explored the land...they went up through the Negev (*just as Moses commanded them to do*) and they came to Hebron...where they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

v.27 : When they returned, they gave this report: We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey. Here is its fruit! (present the grapes)

PAUSE.....

But the people that live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large...The Amalekites live in the Negev, the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites in the hill country, and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.

v.31: **We cannot attack these people;** they are stronger than we are.” And they spread among the Israelites a **bad report** about the land they had explored.

(the people had anticipated HOPE, PROSPERITY...but what they got was the complete opposite from the majority.)

Listen to what happens to the people as they hear this news:

14:1-4 : That night, **all the people** of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly. If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert. Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword....(4) we should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

Did you guys just catch what happened here? ANYONE?? **They moved from a posture of FAITH in the promises of God to a poster of FEAR in a moments notice.**

Write this down for me:

Fear is cultivated in the soil of unbelief.

Think about this practically for a second:

- Why do we all fear clowns? Because we don't believe that they are nice people
- Why Do I fear pregnant women: Because I don't believe that they will make it to the hospital in time and they'll go into labor around me. Seriously.
- Pregnant clown is the spawn of satan....
- We all have fears, and they all stem from UNBELIEF.

The seed of fear in the life of a believer sprouts most often when two things happen:

- when we **"Forget God's promises towards us"**
- when we fail to recognize his **faithful actions** towards us
 - **Rewind on his actions towards them**
 - They were rescued from 400 years of slavery
 - Crossed the Red Sea
 - Not a cute VBS Story...This was an all out WAR and run for their lives
 - God swallowed up the enemy
 - They he PROVIDED Manna for them to eat, Quail, Water from a rock to drink when they were thirsty.
 - **Yet they forgot**
 - Then on top of that, there's this obscure promise in there that most of us would just skip

right over and not see...but it's a promise that God will defeat the Amalekites

- *Reference: Exodus 17:8-16: Joshua fights the Amalekites. Moses goes up on hill and holds his hands up. As long as his hands were up, Israel was winning. When his arms grew tired and fell down, Amalekites won. So Aaron and Hur stood on the left and right and held his hands up until they were defeated. God made a promise...that he would wipe those jokers off the face of the planet.*
- When you get to Numbers 13, Who do the spies see dwelling in that land? **The Amalekites.**
- What did God promise? Victory .
- **YET THEY FORGOT.**
- On top of that, it's no coincidence in the story where the spies are sent and where they see that the Land is full of good things...a place called HEBRON
 - Now, if you don't Remember much about Hebron, let me just give you a quick rundown:
 - Genesis 13: Abram and Lot part ways.
 - Genesis 15: Abram finds himself in a place called Hebron where God gives him this crazy dream and promise:

“The lord said to Abram: Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with GREAT POSSESSIONS!”

- A pivotal moment for Abram and the entire people of Israel.
 - **Numbers 13...here they are...400 years later...rescued from slavery....on the same place where Abraham was promised the land....and they FORGET**
 - They forgot because as one pastor said *“the magnified the obstacles and minimized God’s promise in that moment.”*

○ **Before we go pointing a finger at these goobers, let’s hold up a mirror in front of ourselves for a moment because we all do the SAME THING.**

- **Last semester my family made a Multiply Commitment**
 - Then we got RAILED by the IRS with taxes this year
 - Can we do this?
 - Does God really bless generosity?
- **To Every UNC Fan under the sound of my voice:**

- NORTHERN IOWA.
- You lose by 4 to them
- We STINK. Overrated again
- You wrote them off in NOVEMBER
- Now they’re in the Final Four
- Oh how quickly we forget!

- **To all the parents out there raising kids: HELLO!** Doesn’t the trend always seem to be “We take one step forward in progression and then we take 5 steps backwards??” All you can think about is what? The 5 steps backwards and not the work of God in their lives going forward.
- **Some of you right now have been putting off being baptized because you’ve played through EVERY EXCUSE you could possibly think of on why you shouldn’t be baptized rather than being obedient to the commands of God and just take the step.**

- WE MAGNIFY THE OBSTACLES AND MINIMIZE THE PROMISES.

Fear and Baseball.....Black eye...doesn’t want to engage..
But within the hour, I had convinced him that the game of baseball was worth the small hacks he’ll encounter along the way.

What happens a lot of times is: a kid gets hurt, and they can't shake it out of their mind. **They focus on the OBSTACLE rather than the REWARD....and they never re-engage with the game again.** I see it all the time.

FEAR GROWS IN THE SOIL OF THEIR UNCERTAINTY!!!!

What I want to do is tell those parents...GET YOUR KID BACK IN THE GAME!!!!!!!!!!!! It's worth it! **DON'T LIVE IN FEAR! It's time to wake up, church.**

I wonder how many of us need that reminder today. Your God is so much bigger than the obstacle that you're magnifying right now in your life.

Example of Rowing a boat with 5 of your closest friends:

Who's rowing against the team? The 1
Now who's rowing against? The five
ESPCECIALLY when you know that the direction you're rowing is leading to your death.

- Where did the spies want to go? EGYPT!?!? DEATH??

Listen to one man's response to this madness in Numbers 13:

"The Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said "We should go up and take possession of that land, for we can certainly do it." Numbers 13:30

I could only imagine the horror/shock/awe that Caleb is experiencing has he's hearing these spies give this bad report, and it sets him off. He basically looks at the people and says "SHUT YOUR MOUTHS AND LISTEN TO ME!!!"

In spite of the obstacles, Caleb had faith.

Faith is Cultivated in the Soil of ASSURANCE!

Somehow in the midst of all the obstacles, Caleb and Joshua (who was the other spy that was with him) still had faith in the assurance of God's promises towards his people.. that He would do what he said he would do!

Listen to to how God describes the difference between Caleb and Joshua and the others:

"I have forgiven them, but not one of them will ever see the land that I have promised them (Those old farts are gonna die in the desert.)

But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it." Num. 14: 22-24

Caleb had a "different spirit about him."

Maybe that "different spirit could be paralleled to those like:

- **Shad, Mesh, Benny** "Our God will rescue us, But even if he does not, we'll burn"

- Or maybe like a missionary to Africa, **Rowland Bingham**, weighed the costs of following Jesus and determined, *“I will open Africa to the gospel or die trying.”*

Yeah, those are huge examples. But how in the world do I overcome fear with faith? Simple. Set your MIND and your HEARTS to the promises of God over and over again. Pray them back to him

Pray Scripture! Declare God’s promises from Scripture back to him!

- **Tired** – Psalm 121:4
 - *He who keeps Israel never slumbers nor sleeps. The Lord watches over you! The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade.*
- **Anxious** – Phil 4:6
 - *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*
- **Burdened** – Matt 11:28
 - *Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*
- **Hard financial times** – Hebrews 13:5
 - *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*
- **Don’t feel good/pretty enough** – Rom 5:8 / Psalm 139:14

- *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- *[God], I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. ... Your works are wonderful...*

- **No satisfaction or direction** – Psalm 16:11
 - *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Align your hear to the heart of God.

Israel was promised the Land, though they had to overcome obstacles to take possession of it. Their spies even brought back fruit, proving how good it was, showing it was worth their effort to trust God. Yet they did not trust God, and they failed to enter the Promised Land without fear and compromise. Instead, they fought long, extended, draining wars. They disobeyed, grumbled, and they did not trust their God. **They trusted in their fears rather than their Father.** That is the story of Israel...and it is our story as well.

But OH THERE’S A GREAT JOY that this story points to: You see, in this story, we’re more like the 10 spies and the rest of Israel than we are Caleb and Joshua. We were created to love and know and trust our Heavenly father, but we high tailed it out of the land we were created for and headed to the wilderness willingly. We literally jumped in the boat and started rowing down river back to Egypt.

That's why God had to intervene through Christ. Jesus left the land we were created for and came and fought the decisive battle against the enemies of God to secure that Promise for us all, once and for all... and he did it at the cross. He is God's victor, and the people of God are his beneficiaries. He alone trusted God, and drank the cup of wrath that his Father gave him so that we might know the fullness of the love of God!

Then, like the spy who has been to God's promised land and brought back it's fruit to show us, his frightened, unfaithful people, he rose from the dead crushing the grip and sting of the enemy.

Jesus came to us in enemy territory, fought the battle on our behalf, and walked out of that grave the **victor so that those of us who trust in him might not live lives of FEAR but of faith**. JESUS IS THE VICTOR! We walk in his trail and declare that victory as we go about living in the land in between.

It's time to step out in faith, trust your father, magnify his goodness towards you and not the obstacles in front of you, throw off every weight that hinders and fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of OUR FAITH.

CLOSING(?) Land the plane. Pray. Video. Etc..