

I. Introduction

- A. Vanity Fair magazine did an article on the 38 most famous heirs and heiresses in the world. These are young people whose parents are filthy rich. And they're in line to inherit huge estates, massive treasures, and more money than any of us can imagine.
- B. One heiress is 22 years old, and her family owns huge amounts of real estate in Scotland, going back to the 1300's. Another Italian guy stands in line of 1,000 years of Italian royalty. Another guy descends from 50 generations of Arab nobility. They're not worth a lot right now, but when they claim their inheritance, collectively, these 38 people will be worth multiple billions of dollars.
- C. Can you imagine an inheritance like that?
- D. By the time this series is finished, I hope you can. Because you have something better than them, and the fact that you don't believe it is your biggest problem today.
- E. I am so glad you are here today. We are launching a new series today. You're on the ground floor. The new series is called **BIRTHRIGHT: IT'S YOURS, TAKE IT BACK**. We'll be looking at the book of Joshua. It's one of the most exciting books in the Bible, the sixth book in the Old Testament.
- F. Joshua is a book of battles. And if you have battles in your life, you need this book. Because it's not only a book of battles, it's also a book of supernatural, divine resources to win those battles. It's a handbook on being victorious by the power of God.
- G. Would anybody here like to be victorious by the power of God? You need this book.
- H. But the battles in this book have a purpose: these are battles against the forces that stand between God's people and their inheritance.
 - 1. *(Joshua 1:1-6) 1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: 2 "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. 3 "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. 4 "From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. 5 "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6 "Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."*
- I. They had an inheritance. Enemies stole it away. And now, they have to take it back.
- J. You, follower of Jesus—you have an inheritance too. It is your birthright because you are united to Christ. You have an inheritance. Enemies stole it away. You have to take it back.
- K. Do you know you have an inheritance? A birthright? It's all over the Bible:
 - 1. *(Ephesians 1:11) 11 in Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.*
 - 2. *(Colossians 1:12) 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*
 - 3. *(Romans 8:16-17) 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...*
- L. When the Bible wants to sum up all the fantastic, indescribable, awesome blessings—all the good stuff that God lavishes on your life—it uses the word inheritance.
- M. I am absolutely convinced that God wants to use this series to break through years of defeat in your life. He wants to break through destructive habits, fear, and self-doubt. He wants to erase guilt and shame. I believe God is going to do something amazing in your life because you are opening up your heart to His message through this series called Birthright.
- N. Here in Joshua, God's people are finally ready to step into their inheritance. It's time to enter the Promised Land.

II. Back-story

- A. We won't go into all the back-story—some of you know it, some of you don't. Let's just say that these people were crazy eager to get into the Promised Land. They had journeyed and wandered for forty years to get here.
- B. As a tribe, they had waited for over 400 years to get here. God was bringing His people to the Promised Land.
- C. This was the life of their dreams. This was what got them up every morning. This was the finish line of a lot of waiting, suffering, and effort. And here they were, on the border of the Promised Land, and now it's time to go in and take it.
- D. Joshua tells the amazing story of how a group of people entered the Promised Land.
- E. And by now you might be wondering, so what? Who cares? That's stuff is 3,400 years old. That story belongs to the dusty pages of history. Why would anybody care about blowing the dust off this antique and talking about it in today's modern world?
- F. Good question and the answer is simple.
- G. It's because **GOD HAS A PROMISED LAND FOR YOU TODAY**.
- H. Not physical real estate, but a way of life: A style of life, a manner of life, a prosperous, God-blessed life. There is a promised land for you today, and it's that life that is tugging at your heart strings; that elusive dream that seems out of reach.
- I. God wants to tell you, NO; it's NOT out of reach. God will exert His own omnipotent strength to get you there.
 - 1. *"There remains therefore a [place of rest] for the people of God" (Heb 4:9).*
- J. But you have to want it.
- K. I don't know where you find yourself today, but God wants to bring you to the Promised Land.
 - 1. Maybe you are wandering in the wilderness. For you that might be emotional: loss and heartbreak, or trauma. You feel like you can't recover. You can, with God's help, you can.

2. Maybe your wilderness is financial—you can't seem to get where you need to be. It could be relational, marital, or sexual. I don't know. Maybe your family is a mess.
3. You might not be in a wilderness at all, you're doing pretty well, you're happy with your life—and that's great—I'm happy for you.
4. But you still know you're not where you need to be. Something's missing. You're in some kind of wilderness.
5. Maybe even a tolerable wilderness. Don't you think that after 40 years of wandering, this generation of kids grew up thinking the wilderness was normal?
6. I want to SHOUT to God's people in Redding, and California, and America, and the whole world—THE WILDERNESS IS NOT NORMAL! Quit settling for second best!

L. It is time to experience your birthright as an heir of God and joint-heir with the King of kings and Lord of lords.

M. But to experience your birthright, you have to understand your birthright.

III. The Promised Land

A. The meaning of the Promised Land

1. From the earliest chapters of Genesis, God's people cherished the hope of the Promised Land. It was a literal place, a piece of real estate. When they thought of the Promised Land, they thought of four qualities:
 - a) **PROSPERITY:** It was to be a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Nu 14:8, Lev 20:24; De 26:15; 27:3). This simply means a place of lavish abundance and prosperity. The Promised Land also was a place of pleasure (Ps 106:24).
 - b) **REST:** It was also to be a place of rest, the easing of burdens, and the cessation of labor (2 Chron 14:6; Heb 4:1-9).
 - c) **SECURITY:** Finally home. Finally safe. This is the one place where God's people could finally breathe easy.
 - d) **MISSION:** a place from which God's people would come to exercise universal dominion over all the earth (Daniel 7:27). It was from the Promised Land that God wanted His people to become a light to the nations (Isa 42:6; 52:10).
2. Yes, the Promised Land was literal real estate, but it was emotional and spiritual real estate too. I doubt that God wants to lead you to the geographical Promised Land, unless maybe you go on a tour.
3. But I am absolutely convinced that God wants to lead you to your very own spiritual promised land, a place of prosperity, blessing, rest, security, and mission.
4. You can say amen. All our locations—do you believe God wants to lead you to your very own place of prosperity, blessing, rest, security, and mission?
5. Let me sum up the meaning of the Promised Land in two statements: It would help you big time to write these down.
 - a) The Promised Land is that place in which God's people enjoy maximum blessing from God. God can still bless you when you're not in the Promised Land, but you always have a sense that something's missing.
 - b) On the flipside, the Promised Land is that place from which God's people bring maximum Glory to God. On earth, and in heaven, God's glory would shine the brightest when He had brought His people into the full possession of the Promised Land.
6. God wants to bring you to the place where you experience maximum grace from Him, and He receives maximum glory from you.
7. I think it's awesome He put those two things together.
8. Which is very cool, but it's still abstract.
9. Let's make this really concrete. I want you to think of a race with three finish lines.

B. Three Finish Lines

1. **PROMISED LAND ONE: Heaven**
 - a) In the old spirituals, believers sang of crossing the Jordan River. The Jordan River symbolized dying, and the Promised Land symbolized heaven.
 - b) Even Abraham understood that his ultimate turf was heaven.
 - (1) *(Hebrews 11:10) 10 for [Abraham] waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*
 - (2) *(Hebrews 11:16) 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*
 - c) Even the OT saints understood that the literal Promised Land pointed onward to their heavenly home. And might I say that all your loved ones who die in the Lord have already been brought safely home. They've crossed the Jordan. They have reached the land. The finish on earth is just the starting line in heaven.
 - d) And one day you get to be reunited with them.
 - e) But you say, great—Heaven is my promised land. So how does that help me balance my check book? And cope with my illness?
 - f) Hang on, we're getting there. I promise.

2. PROMISED LAND TWO: GETTING SAVED

- a) Until you have Jesus, you're just wandering in the wilderness.
- b) A few days ago, we were at a pizza place in town with some young adults in church. And they pointed to a guy sitting across the restaurant and somebody said, "That guy is probably the nicest guy in Redding."
- c) And I said back, but do you know that if he doesn't have Jesus, he isn't going to heaven?
- d) Yeah, I'm blunt like that sometimes.
- e) There was a dividing line between the Jews and the Promised Land: the Jordan River.
- f) And there is dividing line between people and everlasting salvation: Jesus the Savior.
- g) It's that simple. And I know I'm not easing into this topic, but can I be really direct and straight on this all important truth? Is that okay today?
 - (1) *Jesus said, unless a person is born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Jesus said that.*
 - (2) *Peter said, (Acts 4:12) 12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*
- h) If you don't have Jesus, you can be decent, honest, moral, and generous. But you're still in the wilderness.
- i) If you don't have Jesus, you can be religious, baptized, confessed, confirmed, and communed. But you're still in the wilderness.
- j) If you don't have Jesus, you can be the nicest guy in town, or the nicest guy in the world. If you haven't crossed over to Jesus, you're still in the wilderness.
- k) I'm inviting you to cross over today. I'm inviting you to step foot into the spiritual Promised Land today.
- l) How do you do it? By faith.
- m) You claim this birthright by faith.
- n) Here is the gospel:
 - (1) Jesus, the Son of God, loved you with an everlasting love. He left the splendors of heaven for you. He came to earth as a baby. He lived a perfect, sinless life. He taught. He healed. He loved.
 - (2) And then on earth's darkest day, rough hands dragged Him before the authorities. They mocked Him, hated Him, and tormented Him. And, though He had all power in heaven and earth in the tip of His little finger, and though He could speak one word, and wipe out His tormentors, Jesus kept His mouth shut. He took the hit.
 - (3) And when those same rough hands nailed Him to an old, rugged Cross, He cried out, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. And then it grew dark as night.
 - (4) Why? Because God in heaven was gathering up all the moral failures of the entire world: All the lies, the hatreds, the murders, the selfishness, the arrogance. God gathered up the sin of the world, in that dark moment, He poured the sin of the world on Jesus.
 - (5) And then Jesus endured the more horrific moment in His short life: God punished Him for our sins instead of punishing us. And Jesus cried out, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
 - (6) Why?
 - (7) *Because Jesus is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).*
- o) This is the gospel. This is the good news. This is how your sin is erased. Forgiven. Taken away. This is the gospel.
- p) But what do you do with this gospel?
 - (1) *(Hebrews 4:2) For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*
- q) Did you get that? The work of Jesus does you no good until you mix it with faith, your own personal choice to rely exclusively on Jesus and His finished work for your eternal destiny. You don't get Promised Land ONE without having first received Promised Land TWO.
- r) You can be saved today. I'm going to give you a chance to cross the Jordan. Leave the wilderness behind. I know you're ready. I believe God wants to save you today, if you've never let Him—be ready at the end. I'm not going to embarrass you, but this is the most important day of your life.
- s) Claim your birthright.
- t) But you say, Bill, I've been saved a long time, and I'm relatively healthy, and if Jesus doesn't return, I don't expect to go to heaven any time soon. So, what is my promised land?
- u) I'm so glad you asked.

3. PROMISED LAND THREE: SPIRITUAL MATURITY

- a) Joshua is God's instruction manual for cracking the maturity barrier. Joshua teaches you, believer, how to enter into a place where you actually experience maximum blessing from God and maximum glory to God. The Promised Land represents spiritual maturity. That's what this verse means:
 - (1) *(Hebrews 4:8-11) 8 This new place of rest was not the land of Canaan, where Joshua led them. If it had been, God would not have spoken later about another day of rest. 9 So there is a special rest [spiritual maturity] still waiting for the people of God. 10 For all who enter into God's rest will find rest from their labors, just as God rested after creating the world. 11 Let us*

do our best to enter that place of rest. For anyone who disobeys God, as the people of Israel did, will fall.

- b) There are a lot of people in our church who have recently crossed the line and received Jesus. That's awesome. In the last four years, Neighborhood Church has counted over 1,900 people who said I am receiving Jesus today. I am leaving the wilderness behind. I am getting saved.
- c) If you can't clap your hands over that, you might need a heart transplant.
- d) **But I want you to know something. Getting saved is a finish line for the first phase of your life. But guess what?**
- e) It's a starting line for the second phase of your life: now, you are headed to maturity. Grow in grace. Grow in knowledge. Grow out of spiritual babyhood. Grow in the Word. Grow in prayer. Grow toward wholeness.
 - (1) *(Hebrews 6:1) 1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.*
- f) Let us go on to maturity.
- g) What is spiritual maturity?
 - (1) Spiritual maturity is that status of growth in which you are able to face every circumstance, every adversity, every prosperity, every opportunity, and every temptation with the inner assurance that whatever God provides is all you need to handle it. His grace is sufficient for you.
 - (2) Spiritual maturity is living life without a sense of deficit, without a victim mentality.
 - (3) It is believing that God really will give you your heart's desires (Ps 37:4), and believing that God really will supply all your need (Phil 4:19), and believing that God is not only able, but willing to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that you ask or think (Eph 3:20).
- h) Spiritual maturity is that status in which you have laid hold of your BIRTHRIGHT—the promises of God and the power they create in you.
- i) When God saved you, He designed a spiritual portfolio of invisible assets that would blow you away if you could see it all. And here's the truth that most Christians don't get: **YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR HEAVEN TO ENJOY YOUR GOD-GIVEN BIRTHRIGHT.** You can access your inheritance now. And not accessing your inheritance now makes you crazy.
- j) Vanity Fair is probably not going to write a feature article about your inheritance any time soon. But you have something better than any of those spoiled rich kids. You are a joint-heir with Jesus. You are richer than you think.
- k) We are going to see what that means throughout this series.

IV. Prayer for the Christ-follower

- A. I am telling you God, that I want to press on toward maturity. I am tired of wandering. I am tired of the wilderness. I am not experiencing your blessing, and I want to. I'm asking you to guide me, help me, and motivate me to cross that line from spiritual childhood to spiritual maturity. That is my desire Lord.

V. Prayer for the Seeker

- A. Admit: I admit I'm on the wrong side of the dividing line. I don't have you, and I need you. I don't live up to your standards. I've broken your laws, and I can't fix it.
- B. Believe: I believe Jesus came to fix it. He came to draw me to You by His love. I believe He is your Son. I believe He shed His blood and died for me. I don't know how it all works, but I believe that Jesus Christ is my way to God—He is my only way to God.
- C. Choose: Right now I choose to receive Him. I choose to believe Jesus. I choose to cross the line from the wilderness of sin to salvation in Him. I'm telling you God that I'm mixing the gospel with faith. And I'm asking you, for Jesus' sake, please save me.

1. *(Romans 10:13) 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*