

Title: Change for Good – Joshua 1:1-9

Aim: Address the church family about support of Pastor Derek.

Intro: Change: for some it is anathema, a curse; for others it is refreshing, life-giving. To change is to make something/someone different; to alter or modify. “Technology & the internet have dramatically changed the way we communicate.” To change also means to replace w/something (someone) else, something of the same kind, hopefully newer & better. We change cars, never replacing a new one w/an old one, but vice versa. Many of us don’t like change for the most part, even if it is for the better, but some change is definitely for the good. Remember that even Jesus said to His disciples (John 16:7), ***“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”*** The disciples couldn’t have imagined that it would be good for Jesus to die & go away, even if He would be raised from death. They liked what they had in Jesus. But it was even better when the Holy Spirit came upon the Church. They still had Jesus not just w/them but in them in the Person of the Holy Spirit. I’m not at all suggesting that the change coming on May 31st (my retirement) is anywhere near as significant, but the point is, when God brings change, it is always for ultimate good. Joshua 1 is one of my personal favorite passages in Scripture. As we walk thru this passage consider the possible comparisons, on a much smaller scale, to our situation going forward as a church family. Every pastor at some point thinks that some particular message is the most important he will ever preach. This message may or may not fall into that category, but it is a very important message I want to share w/you from Scripture & my heart. I do want to take the liberty to substitute a couple of words in this passage, to paraphrase – not change the meaning so much as to

apply it to our situation. Joshua 1:1-9 [READ, substituting “retirement” for “death” (vs1) & “done” for “dead” (vs2) – much more comfortable for me 😊!] I) **Things were changing**. God was bringing about the changes. It was part of His plan for His people. They had been on the edge of the Promised Land before but rebelled against God, not believing Him, taking the witness of the 10 spies who said the people/land were too great to conquer, instead of listening to the witness of Joshua & Caleb, who knew that God would enable them to enter & conquer & take the land. But after leading the people out of Egypt by God’s mighty hand, & leading them for 40 yrs in the wilderness after their rebellion, often interceding for them before God, now Moses was “done” leading the people of Israel, due to his “retirement.” I’m sure many of the people were wondering, “now what? What are we going to do, going forward? Who will lead us? This guy Joshua is pretty young” (tho he was probably in his 60’s at the time). You may be wondering about the future of this church. The important thing to remember is that tho things were/are changing, II) **God wasn’t/isn’t changing!** It was God, through Moses, who had led the Israelites thru ups & downs. It was God who kept His promise to bring them to the Promised Land. Under Moses’ leadership, by God’s grace & power, they had already conquered peoples/lands east of the Jordan River. Now God promised that He would lead the Israelites, through Joshua, thru ups & downs & keep His promise to bring them into the Promised Land & conquer the nations before them. These were God’s people, flawed as they were. He had been w/them; He would be w/them. He promised, ***“Just as I have been w/Moses (& the people), so I will be w/you (Joshua & the people). I will not leave you or forsake you.”*** You know the application here. This is God’s church. You are God’s people – all

who are in Christ. God has been w/this church for all of its 165 years, including the last 38 ¾ years, & from the Pond Road Chapel to 4554 Ft. Bridgman Rd. He will be w/this church as we move into the future, until Jesus comes. We know the church is not the building; the church is the people – you/me. And the church is not about who's pastor, but who is Lord! The Lord who remains faithful from beginning to end. Joshua & Israel's part was to III) **Trust & Obey**. God said, "***Arise & go.***" He said, "***Be strong & courageous.***" "Trust Me, Joshua. Trust Me, Israel. Don't fear what's before you because I am w/you." He said, "***Be sure to do according to all the law...Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success...***" "***Do not be frightened, & do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is w/you wherever you go.***" God would lead them thru His servant He had chosen, Joshua. Our part as the VACC family is to trust God to be God. Let us be strong in the Lord & in the strength of His might, & be courageous – not fearing what is before us because God is w/us & He will not forsake us but lead us onward through the servant He has chosen, Pastor Derek Irvine. Our part is to be obedient & do what God would have us do – make disciples, be His ambassadors, love & serve one another, study & live according to His word. What a great message for Joshua & Israel at a time of transition, on the edge of the Promised Land. What a great passage for us at a time of transition (started October 1, 2024), on the edge of what God has in mind for us, for the future! Nothing profound in that message, but it is eternally true. Today, right now, is the last time I will preach in this pulpit in the official capacity of pastor. It's not the last you'll hear from me – you don't get off that easy! But I want to say thank you so very much for the privilege of being your pastor for the last 38 years, 9 mos. That's all I'm going to say lest I blubber, but Andi &

I thank you & thank God for you. But I do have some things to say on behalf of Pastor Derek & Kathleen. Listen to an old man – not necessarily full of wisdom, but I have nothing to lose; you could only fire me! Pastor Derek has known I was going to say some things, but he doesn't know what. I'm kinda glad that he's not here today; I think God orchestrated that. Here is my rambling counsel: 1) Love them (Pastor Derek, Kathleen & Anna) as you have loved us (Andi, Beth, Blythe, & me). I feel like Paul in his 1st letter to the Thessalonians (4:9-10): “***Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you...you have been taught by God to love one another...that is indeed what you are doing...but we urge you, brothers (sisters), to do so more & more...***” You are a loving congregation, God loving thru you. Love Pastor Derek & Kathleen & Anna more & more & more. 2) Follow your pastor's lead. Recognize that God has called him to this work. Trust God to lead him. Strongly & prayerfully consider his vision, given to him by God who called him. Whatever vision Pastor Derek has will always be vetted by the elders, whom you have elected & believe God has put in place, so trust God. I will tell you now that I believe an initiative Pastor Derek will propose in coming months is from God. Take it at that; give it time & effort. To grow, sometimes it requires a culture shift. Don't be afraid of it or 2nd guess it. Work alongside Pastor Derek. 3) Get involved. Some of you are very involved, others moderately & others – the silent majority, not very involved. Don't expect Pastor Derek or his wife, Kathleen, or simply others to do the work. Invite others to church, engage in the work needing to be done. Discover your spiritual gifts & use them for the good of the church & for God's glory. Consider how God wants to use you & give yourself wholeheartedly to it, not just inside the walls of the church but outside as well. Seek to grow

spiritually. If you're not growing, you're declining. 4) Work hard to maintain unity, as Paul urges us in Eph.4. It really is not about you but about us, & more so about God & His work. Few things are more distressing to a pastor than division, whether it be in the church family as a whole or in families of the church. You may think what's going on in your family doesn't affect the church, but you're wrong. And don't be easily offended. Pray for & work toward unity in the church. We are a family – let's act like it. And even if others don't work for unity, don't let that determine what you do. 5) Pray, Pray, Pray! You want others to pray for you, then you pray for others. Pray for the work of the church & God's work in the world. Pray, pray, pray for Pastor Derek & Kathleen & Anna. There are pressures you know nothing about! Be slow to criticize & quick to praise. And remember, you have not called Kathleen to be your pastor. Let her do what God would have her do serving alongside you. Don't have unrealistic expectations of her. She'll be hard enough on herself. Don't call on Pastor Derek's day off. Call one of the elders or a deacon. Elders & deacons represent the church as well – if one of them visit you, they are representing Pastor Derek on his behalf. Of course, if there is an emergency, he will want to know & come if he can, but understand what an emergency is. Protect Pastor Derek & Kathleen's time. Well, that's it. Probably more that can be said, but I'm done. This church is indeed God's church, w/many good qualities & ways that God is at work. There's much potential here, as we work together w/God & follow Jesus together. Let's be about His business! Bruce is done, now let us arise & go forward!