

“To The Power of Ten”

Numbers 13: 1-3, 25-35; 14: 1-4



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Pastor

And the ten said,:

“The land we explored there devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

The Nephilim were legendary warriors who were huge in size. The book of Genesis, in the story of Noah, talks about angels who mated with earthly women and created this super race of warriors. In Hebrew lore, Goliath was thought to be a son of Anak. The 10 spies said they saw lots of Nephilim over there. Have you ever noticed when people get together and talk about fear it becomes the “bigger fish” story. It seems to grow every time.

When I was a cop we used to have to respond to an intrusion alarm at that big house at the TTU Ranching Heritage Center. After about two calls to the house in one stormy, rainy night, we figured that either there was actually someone hiding in the house or more likely the storm was causing the problem. After a few officer went in to the house a third time I had one call me and let me know he was not going back into the house because he thought he saw an old woman looking from the window. Then when he got upstairs a woman’s dress was laying on the bed that had not been there the previous two times he checked the house. Legend has it the owner of the house died in it back in the early 1900’s. This was a grown, adult, man who carried a gun, chased and engaged in hand-to-hand combat with some of the worst people in society yet, he thinks he saw a ghost and won’t walk back into a house.

One of the questions from God’s Word for us is, “Will we be shaped more by our fears or our faith?” Another ways to say it is, “Will we magnifying our fears and anxieties or will we in the words of the Psalmist, “magnify the Lord?”

In a recent staff retreat, we listed some of the giants, real and perceived that we would face in the coming expansion of the ministries at St. Luke’s:

Giant #1: A Difficult Past Campaign – will history repeat itself?

Giant #2: Will the Southwest Campus advance to the point we won’t feel like a family anymore?

Giant #3: Very few have ever tried this and we never have. Can we do it?

*Will history repeat itself? Which history? Yes, we have learned some difficult lessons in the first campaign, but I remember standing in front of this church and praising God for 1.3 million dollars raised! 51 years ago St. Luke’s started out as church with just a handful of people in a movie theater and then built a physical church together. 4 years ago we started out as a church with about 13 people in a school auditorium and then a movie theater and now here and we have plans to now build the physical church. When we are together in faith and action, God does more than we could ask or think. That’s where I would like us to repeat history. Amen?

*Will the Southwest advance to the point we won’t feel like a family anymore? If I hear God correctly

and carry out the full mission of His vision then we will grow. Are we going to grow to the point we do not feel like family? In my plan that will never happen. As long as we stick to the mission of the church of reaching out to people in love and kindness, offering them Christ at every turn, we will remain united in our faith and fellowship. Every large family has gathering points. When we have a family reunion there are about 75 people together and I know and love every one of them. But while we are together we do congregate in certain circles or dare I saw small groups. I know what goes on in the lives of every person in my family but I am closer to some than others. Folks, we are experiencing that right now, you just might not realize it. This giant will only become real if we make him real.

*We personally have never done anything like this and it has been 28 years since this church has done anything this big. What if it doesn't work? All I can promise is that we are following where we believe Christ is leading us and nothing has been able to stop us thus far. I can tell you at every turn for the past four years that when we step up and move forward, God has provided. The only "sure thing" is what happens if we don't follow God's calling. For the sake of the generations to come to whom we will offer Christ, the risk is worth it. And 5, 10 and 20 years from now, we will look back and say the same thing. "This is not the first big venture of faith for us and it will not be the last. Bring it! It's about time!"

But the people in the book of Numbers chose to listen to the 10 fear-minded spies. "Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" At least they knew what to expect. Never mind that what really was back there was their slavery. Never mind that what was before them was God and his promises. And the bible records that God was not a happy camper. The result was that what should have been a six-month journey ended up taking 40 years as the children went around in circles. And none of the ten or any of the people of the generation who went through the Red Sea went into "the promised land," except for two, Joshua and Caleb. Scholars have discovered that what they did was follow wherever the water was closest and where the risk was lowest. I regret to tell you that the decision of the people to follow the 10 on the journey of what is predictable, comfortable and lowest risk is the decision the majority of American churches are making. And all they are doing is going around in circles, doing what they have always done, one generation from their own extinction. They do something great for God and then they get comfortable and walk where there is no risk. I am not the type of leader of God's people that wants to continue following that pattern.

But there was another choice they could have made, the one God invites us to in this campaign. And it was represented in two men, Joshua and Caleb. Caleb said,

"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

Caleb chose to be motivated not by fear, but by trust and possibility. In that same staff retreat, I led us into a time of dream of what St. Luke's Lubbock could become. We dreamed of two thriving campuses, of a ministry that reaches and develops children and youth and young adults for leadership in our world, of hundreds and thousands of people meeting Jesus Christ as Lord, of St. Luke's Lubbock being known for always being at the edge of what God is doing, and the dreams went on. What possibilities do you see? What impact for Christ do you think God is calling us to? I don't know about you but I want to change lives for Christ. I want people to know Christ and know the mission of St. Luke's Southwest.

There is a little church in the Houston area right now called Lakewood. You may or may not have heard of it. It started out 20+ years ago in a feed store with about 20 or so people. God called a man to preach the gospel and just offer the love of Christ to anybody and everybody without any strings attached. That preacher died and left the legacy to his son, who only knew how to operate television cameras and operate video equipment. He had no intention of following in his father's footsteps. But he answered God's call. The church answered God's call and today the little church of 20 people in a feed store worships with ten thousand and is broadcast around the world. That little church bought the Compaq Center where the NBA played basketball and renovated it to make it a church! You might say, Matt – Houston is booming

and millions of people live there. It is a big city so the church has more available to it. I say, what about the possibility of that little church, which followed God into the promised land, caused people to move to Houston because lives were being changed and they wanted to be a part of it!

Here are two preliminary pictures of the possibilities as far as what we dream for the southwest campus. The first picture is the floor plan. What about the exterior? Our building committee has been working long and hard with Condray Design to make all of this possible and I applaud their efforts, even though they still have work to do. Everything about us says that this is a feasible project. Feasible means it is achievable, but I pray we go beyond the imaginable when we see God's Vision and give ourselves fully to God's Mission.

You church staff has said we are committed. We have joined together and stated, "We're going in to the promised land together." The leaders who have stood before you are also today committing themselves to going in. We invite you to make the same move. In doing so, here is what we ask. First, we ask you to pray that every person in St. Luke's will be faithful to God's call in this effort. John Wesley taught, "Nothing happens, except by prayer." We agree. This is God's work, not just ours. Keep those tent cards front and center as you eat dinner and as you have your own times of prayer. Second, we ask that you get involved. In your brochure, there is a place for you to sign up for the area in which you would like to serve. If every one does a little the burden is light and the joy is multiplied. Turn to the person next to you and say, "You are a crucial part of this venture of faith." We want no one to be left out for each of you is part of the faith, hope and love of St. Luke's Lubbock. Third, we ask you to enjoy this. Be part of the excitement, the expectancy, and the dynamic power of the Spirit when people take steps of daring faith together. I am not going to talk about money, or giving, or sacrifice...today....because you know that time will come. For now though, it's time pray, get involved and enjoy this journey of faith with Christ.

I am heading into the promised land....I pray you will join me.