*After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’s assistant, saying: “My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall lead this people to possess the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”* Joshua 1:1-9

*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints, and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* Hebrews 4:12-16

 *There was an authority-hungry sergeant in the Air Force. This man made sure everyone understood he was the boss. Ironically, he ran across a subordinate who put the egomaniac in his place.*

 *The sergeant screamed the following to an airman third class: “You have one stripe on your arm, and I have four. That makes you nothing! So when I bark, I expect you to move. Because I’m in charge!”*

 *The unimpressed airman replied, “Big deal. A sergeant in charge of nothing.”*

The Undiscovered Country.

1. Every morning, each one of us wakes up, look into the mirror and though we see ourselves, we still do not know what the next five minutes will bring, much less what the entire day might be like. The future, especially the unknown future, might be either the greatest fear we humans as the species may face, or this might be the greatest moment of certainty where we truly belong. We may not know what the new day or the tomorrow might bring and because of this many people try to seek answers using variety of different if not even strange venues. Unfortunately, each and every one of them in a long run, turns to be a failure. Neither the widely advertised the so called *“psychics”* nor the popular *“horoscopes,”* or the *“tarot cards”* and *“crystal balls”* readers, are able to predict the future. Sure, we sometimes may succeed in making sure that our plans will succeed, but we never have a certainty of it and all we might do is to hope. Yet we may succeed only if we rightfully place our hope, otherwise we will not. For ages people sought ways to be able to foresee the future, but they never succeeded. As Christians though, if and when we place our hope in God, we may truly rest assured that our future is secure, and we know what this future really offers.

2. When Josua and the Hebrews approached the land of Canaan, forty years after wondering in the wilderness, they faced the unknown. They have been here before, but because they were afraid to enter the unknown then, they became the desert nomads, wondering the Sinai peninsula for 40 years, until all of those who feared entering the Canaan the first time, have died. Now, even the leader of this *“band of people,”* Moses has died, and God chooses in his place a man who was not afraid to conquer that land some 40 years before, thus, Joshua becomes a chosen man, to lead them into what will become the Jewish *“homeland.”* Although for the Hebrews, at that moment the future might have been seen as the *“great unknown,”* was it really the *“great unknown?”* ? On the surface, it might look like the conquest of Canaan is still a *“great unknown,”* but because Joshua’s promises come from God, Joshua knows that their future is bright. He knows that because he listens to God and because he trusts God, the conquest of Canaan will be truly a total success.

3. Just as we open our eyes every day and get ready to enter it, that day is like a blank page, not written yet and wide open. Apart from knowing what is the date and a time, or what special occasion the day may represent, since different types of calendars carry different information, such as the celebration of various Holy days, the commemoration of events such Remembrance or Labor days, but as far as our personal *“stories”* are concerned, there are none written yet and these are in a sense a *“great unknown.”* We yet have to fill in all the blanks. We may anticipate, we may plan, we may hope to succeed with our incentives, but we do not know until we experience them. The story of Joshua leading the Hebrews into the *“Holy Land,”* indicates such an incredible moment, however Joshua knows what this future will be, because he trusts God and he knows, this is the beginning of a new era, a new history, the future for the young, new nation: Israel.

4. The Bible teaches us that God spoke to Joshua and assured him of His presence with him just as He was always present in Moses’ life. Obviously nobody could replace Moses, but God is the One who can offer to anyone the same strength and wisdom as Moses did. God offered Joshua what He offered Moses before, hence His words: *“as I was with Moses I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you.”* God promise to Joshua was the same as we, His Church, received from Jesus Christ when He said: *“I am with you until the end of time.”* Ever since He became our Savior, our *“high priest,”* our future is plain and clear, our future is the *“Great Known,”* although we may see our individual days as the great *“unknowns”* in terms of what will actually happen. This *“great known”* happens because of Jesus’ promise. Our future has been secured and we do not have to worry about what the individual days may bring. That is what we know and are assured of. Just as the Hebrews’ future was assured in God’s promise to Joshua.

5. For 40 years Moses was responsible for his people, ever since he was placed by God in a leadership role, but now Joshua becomes the new leader. His role however is quite different from that of Moses, for Moses was responsible for 40 years of the wilderness experience, all this time being a *“caretaker”* of the *“rebellious”* crowd, while God was the One who fed His people and took care of their daily needs, even including their clothing and footwear. Now as they are about to enter this new future, the *“Undiscovered Country,”* they will have to fight and to conquer the land, so, Joshua becomes a military leader not a spiritual one as Moses was. Moses was the one who held his staff high while God destroyed the Pharaoh army, but now Joshua will lead the people into the battle directly. Ap. Paul will eventually echo the words Joshua received from God in when he was chosen as a leader in Moses’ place, while writing: *“one thing I have laid hold of: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.”* Looking into the Canaan, Joshua knew what God has prepared for him and the people, and he was looking into the new future with hope and assurance.

6. Joshua was promised a victory and prosperity in the new land if the people will obey God and follow His directions. As the Church, we received the same promise as Joshua did, and we know that God’s promises are as true and real now as they were true when God has given them to Abraham, to Jacob, to Isaac, to Moses, and to Joshua. They all received a guarantee of the *“Promised Land,”* and at the dawn of the conquest, the Hebrews with Joshua are once again reminded of God’s pledge first given to the man from Chaldean Ur, called Abram. As God’s children we too were given the promise of the Messiah, and when the Messiah, our Christ, Jesus came, He added to His promise the promise of taking care of us and of all our needs, until the *“end of times.”* This promise is still alive and well, but we must accept it and embrace it. God said to Joshua: *“Get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give you…”* We are given the same prompt every day when we wake up and every new day begins to us with God’s promise to be able to perform any task He places before us, but we have to *“get ready”* and to do what God calls us to do.

7. In the Book of Joshua I find one of the most important Scriptural passages supporting my life as a Christian on daily basis. It is found in the words of the verse 8: *“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth…”* These words indicate the key to our success as Christians. Many tasks we undertake in life often seem to be beyond our abilities, but God will not only allow us to take them on, but He will also help us to be successful. St. Francis said in his prayer: *“Make me an instrument of Your peace.”* I would like to paraphrase him by saying: *“God, make me an instrument of a change.”* As the society and as the Church of the 21st century, we need to be *“God’s instruments of change.”* With God’s support we can make His Word to be alive again in this world and this is what this world so desperately needs. This world needs to hear God’s words to Joshua: *“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth…”*

8. God’s Word is what gives us the true, not the *“man-made”* vision of whatever we might see as right. We need to realize that it is only through God’s Word we are able to be transformed. Only if and when we are transformed by God, we will make right choices. I often see the modern Church following the principles and the views of the modern society’s and in result of all these views we experience, and not only in the society but even in the Church, so many divisions if not even outright hatred. We even created a word describing this: the *“vitriol.”* Yet, I truly believe that for God there is nothing beyond repair. Joshua and the Hebrews were promised God’s blessings and as long as they remained faithful, this was true. The same applies to us, the 21st century Church, but we must remain faithful to God and His Word, not to our human, *“man-made”* ideologies, principles, and views, whether of a social or a political nature. Only with God on our side we will succeed as individuals and as the species. As you know I like to begin my sermons with a joke, today I would also like to end with one, especially because it seems to be quite appropriate.

*Two cows were grazing in a pasture when they saw a milk truck pass. On the side of the truck were the words: “Pasteurized, homogenized, standardized, vitamin A added.” One cow sighed and said to the other: “Makes you feel sort of inadequate, doesn’t it?”*

We try to improve on milk, but one thing we will never be able to improve on is the Word of God.

It does not need any pasteurizing, standardizing, or homogenizing. It’s adequate enough.