

# **“Choosing Between Faith & Fear”**

Numbers 13:17-14:9

Camp Hill UMC/Celebration

Sunday, October 3, 2011

Preacher: Rev. Tom Willard, Senior Pastor

## **INTRODUCTION THERE ARE MANY HINGEPOINTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

The Boston Tea Party  
The Alamo  
The Lewis & Clark Expedition  
Pearl Harbor  
The Great Depression  
The Firing on Fort Sumter  
The Battle of Little Bighorn  
The Sinking of the Lusitania  
The Moon Landing  
The Discovery of Gold in California  
The Assassinations of Lincoln & Kennedy  
The events of 9/11  
To name just a few

## **TRANSITION FOCUS TODAY IS ON TWO HINGEPOINTS IN BIBLICAL HISTORY**

1. World Communion Sunday focuses on Christ’s death on the cross for us
2. Numbers 13 & 14 focuses on Israel’s aborted attempt to enter the Promised Land

### **I. ISRAEL ARRIVES AT A TIME OF DISCERNMENT**

- A. They had arrived at the southern border (Kadesh) of the Promised Land
- B. Decision: Do we: (1) enter into Promised Land, or (2) turn around
- C. Up until now Israel has been travelling in relatively unoccupied territory
  1. There have been plenty of challenges like food & water
  2. Not previously had to fight
  3. Not a professional army, but a ragtag bunch of escaped slaves
- D. Sending the 12 spies into the Promised Land was part of a discernment process
- E. Their mission was to spy out the land
  1. What’s the land like? Is it good or bad?
  2. Many people living there or few?
  3. Are they strong or weak?
  4. Are their cities fortified (walled) or unfortified?
  5. Is the land fertile or poor?
  6. Does the land have trees in it or not?
  7. Bring back samples of the land’s fruit.
- F. The exploration of the land took 40 days
- G. The spies report back about the land
  1. Showed one cluster of grapes carried between two men
  2. Also returned with pomegranates & figs
  3. Land flows with milk (good grazing) & honey (lots of flowers for bees)
  4. The people are powerful
  5. Cities are fortified
  6. Giants in the land (descendants of Anak; Nephilim)

H. Caleb's advice: "We should go up and take possession of the land; we can do it!"

I. Advice of 10 Spies: "There's no way that we can attack this land!"

1. The inhabitants are stronger than we are
2. They spread a bad report among the people
3. The land devours its inhabitants
4. There are huge giants in the land; we look like grasshoppers next to them.

## **II. ISRAEL NOW HAS REACHED THE POINT OF DECISION**

A. Response of the Israelites was almost predictable:

1. Raised their voices
2. Weeping
3. Grumbled against their leaders: Moses & Aaron
4. If only we had died in Egypt or the desert!
5. Debate forming a "Back to Egypt Committee"

B. Joshua & Caleb (2 of the spies) tore their clothes & addresses Israelites:

1. This is an "exceedingly good" land, a land of milk & honey
2. The LORD will lead us into the land & give it to us
3. Don't be afraid of the people of the land (2xs); we'll swallow them up!
4. The LORD has removed their protection
5. The LORD is with us!
6. Don't rebel against the LORD by turning away from his preferred future!

C. Whole assembly debates whether or not to stone Joshua & Caleb

D. The glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting

1. How long will this people treat me with contempt?
2. How long will they refuse to believe me—in spite of all I've done for them?
3. Stand back & let me destroy them with plague & make a great nation from you

E. Moses pleads with the LORD on behalf of the Israelites & asks for forgiveness

F. God in response forgives the Israelites, but also judges them

G. Condemned to wander 40 years in the wilderness until that generation dies

H. Everyone 20 years old & up who has grumbled against the LORD will die

I. Only Caleb & Joshua will live to see the Promised Land

J. Your children will enter Promised Land only after they've buried you all

K. 10 spies who spread a bad report were struck down by the plague & died

L. Next day Israel is willing to enter the Promised Land

M. Moses warns the people not to do it because God is not with them

N. Neither Moses nor the Ark of God accompanied them

O. Soundly defeated by Amalekites & Canaanites

## **III. CHUM HAS LIKEWISE REACHED A POINT OF DISCERNMENT**

A. We are currently engaged in a consultation to this end

B. Trying to clearly ascertain God's preferred future as we move forward

C. You're invited to help us listen for God's direction

D. Focus groups with the Rev. Dr. Samuel Sheffler (Oct. 13, 20, 27, & Nov. 3)

E. Time of decision about which way forward will come at Church Council on 12/14

F. Invite you to pray with me throughout this process

## **CONCLUSION THIS TRULY IS A HINGE POINT IN THE HISTORY OF CHUM**

History's hinge points always require a decision about what our response to them shall be.

Will we here at CHUM choose FAITH or FEAR?