January 24

Grace and peace to you this day.

This week we will continue our walk through the books of the Bible by looking at the fourth book, called the book of Numbers. As we will see, it is called "Numbers" because at the outset, God commands Moses to take a census of all the Israelites.

There are a number of themes that arise from Numbers, and one of them that we will look at today is the theme of **preparation**. Numbers opens with the Israelites camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, having been freed from slavery in Egypt. Remember that as the chosen people, God intends to use the Israelites to announce Himself to the world through their obedience to Him. Thus, God Himself refers to them as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6).

But as Numbers opens, the Israelites are anything but. To call them a rag tag group would be doing a kindness to the phrase “rag tag.” They are a grumbling, unorganized lot who have no idea what they’re doing or where they’re going. But as we see time and time again in Scripture, God will not be deterred from His plan of redemption by mere human shortcomings. So, He orders Moses to take a census in order to start the process of forming the Israelites into a nation. This is what He says:

“The Lord spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. He said: ‘Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. You and Aaron are to count according to their divisions all the men in Israel who are twenty years old or more and able to serve in the army. One man from each tribe, each of them the head of his family, is to help you’” (1:1-4).

God knows the road ahead will be tough, and so He begins the process of preparing the Israelites for what is to come. As we will see, this process of preparation will be ongoing. The Israelites will not prove to be willing students, yet the Lord persists.

When I read this book, I am reminded of a saying a friend of mine has that I often come back to: “God doesn’t call the qualified, He qualifies the called.”

And so it is with the Israelites and, I think, and so it is with us. What is the Almighty preparing you for today? Don’t feel qualified? That’s OK. As with Moses and the Israelites, the Lord will prepare you. Go ahead and let Him, and then like the Israelites, see what Promised Land He leads you to.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

January 25
Greetings, DGCC Family.

As we continue with the book of Numbers today, another theme I would like to explore is **community**.

After the census was taken, the Lord commanded that the Israelite camp be ordered in a precise manner, with the Tabernacle at the center. This is what the Lord said:

“The **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: ‘The Israelites are to camp around the tent of meeting some distance from it, each of them under their standard and holding the banners of their family’” (2:1-2).

And then He issued two pages of detailed instructions about the arrangement of the camp, according to the twelve tribes of Israel, which together totaled over 600,000 people. The camp looked like this:

![The Wilderness Camp](image)

By instructing in this way, God is continuing the process of **preparation** by forming a **community**. The Israelites would have to live, work, and fight together in order to reach and conquer the Promised Land. While they were separate tribes, they needed to form a single **community** that would become the nation of Israel.
And, notice here what is at the center of the camp: the tabernacle. God places Himself at the center of this community, with no tribe physically further from Him than another.

As God instructed the Israelites 3,500 years ago, so does He instruct us today. After all, we are Downers Grove Community Church. While we get concerned, and rightfully so, about the pandemic, church finances, and so on, first and foremost, let’s always work, in all we do, to keep God at the center of all we do, because our community belongs to Him.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

January 26
Happy Wednesday, everyone.

A third theme I would like to explore from the book of Numbers today is a most unfortunate one, but one that I’m afraid affects us all: the theme of disobedience.

The Israelites are about to enter the Promised Land, and the Lord commands Moses to send a group of men ahead of them in order to explore the land. Remember that the Lord has repeatedly told the Israelites that He will deliver the land into their hands. The men come back and, despite the Lord’s repeated promises, tell Moses and the Israelites that they can’t take the land because the people who occupy it are too strong and are of “great size” (13:32). They report that “we seemed like grasshoppers” compared to them (13:33). Only Joshua and Caleb trust in the Lord and are ready to occupy the land.

The people revolt and threaten to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb. Finally, the Lord has had enough of their disobedience and rebellion and sentences them to wander in the wilderness for forty years, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. This is what He says:

    The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: “How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness. For forty
years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.’ I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this wilderness; here they will die (14:26-35).

So, if you’ve ever wondered why the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years, now you know.

How sad. After all they’ve been through, they would never see the land “flowing with milk and honey” promised so long ago to the patriarch Abraham. And all because of their disobedience.

So, what’s our lesson for today? Perhaps it is this: disobedience produces wandering. God never lets go of us, but when we operate outside of His will, well, the wilderness unfortunately becomes our home. So, my prayer for you, and for us, today is this: that we cling steadfastly to the Word, the Will, and the Wish of the Almighty. Let’s let Him take us by the hand and lead us into the land of grace, and mercy, and love. The land that He promises to you, and to me.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

January 27
Blessings to you this day.

Concluding our brief look at some of the themes in the book of Numbers, today we will look at the theme of blessing. The passage we will examine for today will be familiar to most, if not all, of you:

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace” (6:24-26).

This blessing is the one that the Lord instructs the priests to use when they bless the Israelites. This is a deeply personal blessing that the Lord Himself issues. It is not fabricated by a priest, but instead is spoken by the Lord Himself as His special blessing.
Because of its personal nature, He first invokes His image and says “His face shine
upon you.” Think about that. Here the Lord invites you to consider His very face, that
is, His personal image, and the light that shines from it.

Next the Lord **blesses** us with grace and peace, again, as a demonstration of His
personal nature and character.

Lastly, the Lord seeks to **bless** us by “lift[ing] His countenance upon you.”
“Countenance” means His personal expression. Said another way, the Lord of all
creation seeks to **bless** us in a most personal way by revealing His face, His grace, His
peace, and His personal expression to us.

So today, I pray that you are **blessed** knowing that the Most High imparts His personal
**blessing** to you, and may His face shine brightly and graciously on you today and
always.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

**January 28**

Happy Friday everyone.

Here’s your musical devotional for today – a Sabbath prayer and blessing from my
favorite musical. May you be blessed!

IHS,
Pastor Lou

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=618IKgQ2wys