

## A New Day

### Joshua 5:10-12

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**11** The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.

**12** The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.



Special Music:

“New Day”

Danny Gokey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TrKXehB0pg>

**Music for March 30, 2025**

**Opening Hymn:**                   **“O Worship the King”**   **#73**           **vrs. 1,3,5**

**Grace/Praise Hymn:**           **“Fill My Cup, Lord”**   **#641**           **All vrs**

**First Covenant Voices:**       **“Psalm 23”**           **754**

**Servant’s Hymn:**               **“Are Ye Able”**       **#530**           **vrs 1,2, 4**

**Special Music:**                 **“New Day”**           **Danny Gokey**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TrKXehB0pg>

## **A NEW DAY FOR CHESTER**

Chester Plesky paid careful attention to the golden honey flowing from the vat into the jar. When it was full, he twisted the lid tight, wiped the excess from the jar, and slapped a Honey Rock Farms label on it. He then added it to the box he was preparing to ship to Wonder Boys Grocery in Ruskville. They had ordered ten cases of a dozen sixteen-oz jars, and Chester was on box number three. It wasn't a difficult job, but Chester found it oddly satisfying. He began to fill the next jar. A sensor went off, letting him know the vat was getting low on honey. He finished filling the jar he was working on, wiped it off, and added the label. He then carefully placed the jar into the box.

Standing up, he walked over to the nearby prep room and lifted a heavy five-gallon bucket of raw honey and returned to the vat. Taking the top off the bucket, he checked for anything in the bucket that shouldn't be there. Chester then picked it up, climbed the small ladder, and poured the honey into the vat. He did this two more times before he began filling more jars. Yes, it wasn't difficult work. Probably the most difficult part was lifting the heavy buckets up to the mouth of the vat.

Just a month ago, Chester was sitting in his office in Chicago, staring at a wall map of the United States. For over thirty years, he had been a health insurance agent. He had never been very satisfied with that part of his life. It wasn't that he didn't like helping people with their health insurance, but in the last few years all the changes in government regulations, the rising cost of health

care, and the problems with the carriers being unable to find enough providers, Chester had become increasingly unable to meet the needs of his clients, especially the ones on limited budgets. The insurance industry had changed a lot since he had begun that journey back in the early nineties.

Chester's wife, Patricia, had passed during COVID after falling prey to pneumonia. They had no children, but Patricia had kept busy up until her passing by helping out at her church and volunteering at the local shelter. She and Chester loved to travel when they could. He missed their time together, and the house seemed to grow colder and emptier with each passing year.

Sitting at his desk in his insurance office a month ago, Chester finally admitted that he wasn't where he needed to be physically, mentally, or spiritually. He felt dead inside. Empty. Drained and unable to keep going. He needed a change in his life. A radical change. He had a dartboard on the back of his office door. The door was riddled with holes where Chester had missed the board. He kept his darts in the left middle drawer of his desk and would take them out only when he was struggling with decisions that needed to be made. It helped him to clear the clutter from his mind.

That Tuesday was one of those days. But his target was not the object of his intentions. Pulling out just one dart, he closed his eyes and flung the dart at the map on the wall. A healthy sound of ka-thunk meant that he had found his mark on the map. Getting up from his chair, he looked at where the dart had landed. Parable, Texas? Where or what was Parable, Texas? Going to the computer on his desk, he did what anyone in his situation would do. He Googled

it. “Parable Texas. Central Texas, south of Austin, TX. Population - 2500 souls, Notable tourist interests - None. Notable Events – Cantaloupe Festival in October.”

At first, Chester had thought he might ought to rethrow the dart. Maybe that was just a practice throw. But the more he thought about it, the more he realized Parable, Texas, might be just the place for him. He didn’t need to make a lot of money. He had plenty in his retirement account, and his book of business was worth something to someone.

He again looked online to see if there was a local newspaper, and there was! The Parable Beacon. It could hardly be called a newspaper, though. There were articles about lost pets and town council decisions. Chester skipped over these to get to the help wanted ads. Several local farmers and ranchers were looking for field help, but he knew that those days were behind him. There was a local watering hole in search of a barback, but Chester didn’t feel that would be challenging enough.

But then he saw it. Honey Rock Farms, a beekeeping business, was looking for help. It didn’t pay much, but the idea of learning about bees sounded enticing. A complete change from what he had been doing. He called the number in the ad and spoke with Patty Smithers, telling her he would like the job but couldn’t start for a month. She thought that a little strange until she heard him say he was in Chicago and about to move to Parable. Next, he called the only Parable Real Estate company he could find and spoke with Esther Collins.

**Chester told her that he was looking for a small two or three bedroom house, preferably ready to move into. He would pay cash to expedite things.**

**Then he made the phone calls to sell his book of business, his house, and most of his belongings, and left the rest of the details to his secretary as he went home to start packing what he would take with him. And in just over three weeks, he had managed to arrive in Parable and start learning the bee business. It was a New Day for him. A total makeover. A complete change. And in the short week he had been in town, he had absolutely fallen in love with the local citizenry.**

**Chester couldn't help but believe that God had his hand in everything that had happened. He felt that Parable was where he was meant to be all along. With so very much to be thankful for, he could hardly believe his new life.**

**So, this morning, he had awakened to the sound of the chickens next door. The coffee maker had his morning brew ready, and he sat on the porch watching the sunrise. He had even put a little honey in his coffee as a kind of anointing for this new life that he was now beginning.**

**Now, as he watched the honey drip from the vat into the jars, he was reminded of how much his life had changed in such a very short time. And he didn't regret it one bit. He felt he was finally home. He felt alive again. Change can be a beautiful thing.**

**Have you ever had a moment in your life that was completely transformative? One that changed everything you had known and everything you thought about yourself? I have known people who live their entire lives in the same house that their parents grew up in, and even some who live in a house built by their grandparents. But those are very rare, indeed.**

**Believe it or not, the average American moves 11.7 times in their life. There are a lot of factors to be considered in that number, which is one reason I struggle with statistics as much as I do with generalities.**

**Those who serve in the military often move every three years. When you consider the length of some military careers, that can be a lot of change. Having grown up in a military family, I have lived in quite a few places, myself. There were always contributing factors that caused me to move from one place to another. Some of those moves were nearby, and some were very far away. But every move constituted change, often resulting in a collapse of my support environment. Physically moving from one place to another, we need to find a new circle of friends, new doctors, new jobs, new housing arrangements, new places of worship, and even deal with changes in the way we handle taxes and local laws. Moving is never easy.**

**This moment in our scripture today is all about stepping into change. The Israelites escaped Pharaoh and then wandered in the desert for 40 years. None of the original adult escapees crossed over into the promised land. Moses, their great leader, who brought them out of Egypt, has died, and Joshua now commands the Israelites as they enter the land promised to Abraham so many**

generations before. They have witnessed the miracle of the priests stopping in the middle of the Jordan River with the Ark of the Covenant, and are amazed as the river parts for them to cross. Joshua has the leaders of the twelve tribes stack twelve rocks on top of one another in the middle of the river to commemorate each tribe. It was also the time for the celebration of Passover. It is a time of blending the old with the new.

God has fed them with manna and water throughout the journey in the wilderness, but on the day after they start collecting fruit and grains from the trees and plants in the Promised Land, in the Valley of Jericho, suddenly the manna stops showing up. This is before the battle of Jericho. It is the 'We have arrived' moment. It is the 'We have completed the journey started by our fathers and mothers, and are now beginning a new one.' It is the arrival of 'A Brand New Day!' Leave the old behind, the manna, the dusty robes, the struggles of the wilderness, the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night. Let's shake the sand from our sandals and embrace the sunrise of God's Promise.

I'm sure there were people among the Israelites who were going to miss those things, thinking that God must have deserted them, naysayers who were afraid to taste the fruit, to drink the honey of God's Promise. People who were afraid to trust new water sources or who didn't want to give up their meager belongings. But we can't drag the old into the new and expect to thrive. Those things were for yesterday, when we were struggling in a different place. Today, we are here, presented with new challenges and new ways of doing things. What



worked for us in the desert is not going to work in this new place. Cast it aside and step into the newness that God has given to us through his bounty.

How many know the guy or gal, or maybe ARE the guy or gal, who keeps things, hoards things, just in case they might need them one day. You know what I'm talking about. The guy who keeps the three-foot 2 X 4 in the corner of the basement, just in case. The gal who has the phone charger for every phone she has ever owned. The person who has three fax machines in the closet, just in case they ever make a comeback. And then it comes time to move on, and we have all this worthless 'junk' that we think about taking with us because, who knows, someday we might need it? Do we really need to pack all that food from the pantry and fridge, knowing full well that we can replace it when we get to wherever we are going? Maybe we should consider blessing other people with that food.

It's a new day. There is no reason to drag yesterday's troubles into it. When we leave things at the foot of the cross, there is no reason for us to pick them back up and carry them wherever we are going. Why is it so difficult to leave our burdens with Jesus after we have already laid them down? 'But we might need them later.' Need them? We laid them down because we no longer needed them. They had become burdens for us. They no longer served a purpose in our lives. As a matter of fact, carrying them around kept us from getting closer to Jesus. And if getting closer to Jesus is our goal, then why are we picking them back up again? We are so stiff-necked when it comes to such things.

When Jesus sends out the seventy-two disciples in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke, he says “**<sup>3</sup> Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup> Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.**” But for some reason we think we need to overprepare before we reach into our own communities with the gospel.

As Christians, we have the unique opportunity to start new every day. When we go to bed at night, we can lay down all the matters of the day that prevent us from being in full fellowship with our Savior and Lord. And the next day, when we get up with the sunrise, we can choose to leave those things at the foot of the cross and start the day fresh in anticipation of accomplishing what God would have us do. That is an enormous blessing that we often don't take to heart. Instead, we just pick all those things that were weighing us down, put them across our back, and carry them with us. When we do that, it prevents us from engaging in total fellowship with the Lord we serve. It's like trying to reach the surface of a lake with bricks tied to our feet. And we wonder why we can't break through to the surface. All the while, we didn't need to tie those bricks to our feet at all. We left them on the shore for Jesus to deal with, but when we got up, we tied them back on our feet without even thinking about it.

In our story today, Chester made a conscious choice to leave everything that was dragging him down and step into something new. He didn't try to open an insurance office in Parable. No. He stepped into something brand new. He stepped into something outside of the box of his past and reinvented himself so that he could enjoy his New Day.

**So, what's our story? When we became Christians, did we insist on bringing the struggles of our past with us? Are we waiting for manna when there is honey and fruit right in front of us for the taking? Are we so accustomed to being fed in the morning that we can't seem to find a way to feed ourselves?**

**Last week, we talked a little about moving on from pabulum and finding ourselves growing into the purpose that God created for us. Are we still wanting mother's milk, or are we ready to take a bite out of that fig that God tells us he has set aside for us? Are we satisfied living in the wilderness on manna when the Promised Land is only a few steps away?**

**I want us all to think about that this week as we look towards the challenges ahead of us, not the ones we have already been delivered from. It is time to step into a New Day and embrace its promises.**

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**God Bless You All**

**AMEN**



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