

## **Numbers 10:11-36**

### **Followers of Jesus are invited in to invite others in.**

Road trips - we don't take as many as I remember as a kid. But the beginning of the journey held so much energy, anticipation, excitement. Waking up early, loading up the car. Anxious to hit the road.

Not yet to the long hours of driving through the wild-blue yonder!

That's the energy when we come to Numbers 10:11-36.

Everything has been made ready. They have been here before Mt. Sinai for almost a year. The tabernacle has been constructed according to the Lord's plan. The camp has been organized and told how to set out. Worship has been prescribed. The cloud and fire was set, announcing God's presence to guide their way.

Now the "cloud lifted" and the people began their journey.

Led by the Ark - tribes in order - heading to the next destination on their way to the promise, a land God would give his people.

In the midst of this movement we see an invitation. One that casts light on our own invitation and should stir us to pass on the invitation to others.

### **Our Invitation**

Backstory for Israel. A people in slavery invited to redemption. To be brought out, to be given freedom, but more than that. A promise of a place of their own. We see it highlighted in Moses' invitation to Hobab.

**Numbers 10:29** "And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will do good to you, for the LORD has promised good to Israel." (ESV)

‘Setting out for the place the Lord said “I will give to you.”’

It’s this promise that keeps them. Many hurdles will come along the way. One generation will miss it because of disobedience. But those that hope in the promise-giver, that long for the land, they will see it. Own the promise.

They have God’s presence with them, his provision for them. A hunger for the promise drives them onward.

As Moses says... **Numbers 10:35b** “Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.” (ESV)

This promise points to another. When the people lose sight of what they’ve been given. When they set aside the roadmap and miss their turn...

God promises more. Another prophet. God with us. A king to reign forever with the promise of a permanent home won by him for us.

We can take heart and be encouraged by Israel’s movement because like them we have been invited to something better, and to a lasting home with Jesus.

**Matthew 11:28–30** “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (ESV)

Freedom from slavery to sin. New identity, purpose, perspective. And a vision for the future that drives us onward.

The cloud of witnesses in Hebrews, those who had faith, can apply to our hope.

**Hebrews 11:14–16** “For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. [15] If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. [16] But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.” (ESV)

To life forever with Jesus.

We can keep going because of what he has done - and because of what he has promised to do.

But it's still a journey. A journey where we are made part of something bigger than ourselves.

As Israel takes these first steps what strikes me is how many of them had to move. And all of them were part of the march.

Stitching a tapestry that may have not made sense to them but was becoming something beautiful.

We have names of captains, heads of tribes - but each person they represent, all of them are part of the story God is telling the world.

Even so, the journey will be long and difficult. The next chapter is given a superscription "The People Complain!"

It is clinging to the promise that gets them through.

**Numbers 10:35–36** "And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you." [36] And when it rested, he said, "Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel." (ESV)

Moses singing to God to lead... "He knew that God's people constantly need to be reminded of this reality. Is the same not true of us as well? I know that it often is for me. I constantly forget that my pilgrimage is a fight in which, unless the Lord wins the victory for me, all of my best efforts are in vain. How many things in my life would be different if I remembered that truth!

If I remembered this reality, I would pray more and be more constant in invoking God's aid in my struggles. I would awaken every morning crying out, "Rise up, O Lord! Protect me against my enemies and against temptation. Walk with me throughout this day!" I would go to sleep at night asking the Lord to remain with me, thanking him for his sustaining presence and power throughout that day. Moment by moment, in between rising and resting, my thoughts would return repeatedly to the Lord to invoke his presence and his power with me." ID

We have the Spirit to remind us of who we are, whose we are, and where we are headed.

We have to remember that our journey with Jesus will necessarily involve discomfort and suffering. It is a journey whose sacrifices only make sense in light of the outcome.

The longer we walk, the more we trust that the One who began a good work in us will bring it to completion and like Paul we will learn perseverance.

**Philippians 4:11–13** “Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. [12] I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. [13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (ESV)

Walking with family keeps us. Through the wilderness of this life we can cry out to the Lord on each other’s behalf. Remind one another of what we have in Christ. Model for each other what it is to trust him along the way.

Voices that will sing to us like Moses...

**2 Corinthians 4:16–18** “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. [17] For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (ESV)

What is ahead of us is worth it. Jesus is worth it.

Have you responded to the invitation? To rest, to salvation, to journey with Jesus?

Do it now. Know his rest and peace, and live!

If you have, invite others.

## **The Invitation We Give**

Hobab, likely Moses' brother-in-law, he is invited on the journey.

**Numbers 10:29–32** “And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, ‘I will give it to you.’ Come with us, and we will do good to you, for the LORD has promised good to Israel.” [30] But he said to him, “I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred.” [31] And he said, “Please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. [32] And if you do go with us, whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you.” (ESV)

Moses invites him both to the experience of the promise and to be useful.

Hobab had been around for a while... with the camp, with Moses. He knew the score. Moses invited Hobab to join the spiritual descendants of Abraham, who left his home and his people by faith, seeking a city with foundations that God had promised him.

“Come with us and we will do good to you for the Lord has promised good to us.”

Like Moses we have the authority to invite others into the promise - it actually has been the point all along.

**Luke 24:46–48** “and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things.” (ESV)

**2 Corinthians 5:16–20** “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his

appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (ESV)

Making disciples. Freeing captives. Proclaiming forgiveness of sin in his name.

The harvest is ripe.

Barna research. *“Pollsters found that all generations, including young Americans, want to grow spiritually, with 77% of Gen X and millennials expressing what Barna Group CEO David Kinnaman described as “spiritual hunger.” Among Gen Z, 73% expressed such a desire, while 72% of baby boomers said the same.*

*“At 80%, a sizable majority said they believe “there is a spiritual or supernatural dimension to the world,” with half expressing certainty in the existence of the supernatural and 30% saying, “I think it exists, but I’m not certain.”*

*“Eighty-three percent of both Gen Z and millennials said they believe in a “supernatural/spiritual dimension,” followed by 82% of Gen X and 79% of baby boomers.”*

The Way is better.

Statistical significance in mental health markers. Cares for the least. Advocates for safety. Gives voice to those who don’t have one culturally.

**Luke 14:12–14** *The Parable of the Great Banquet* “He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. [13] But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, [14] and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” (ESV)

Some will refuse the invitation... but we keep asking.

**Luke 14:21–23** “So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out

quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ [22] And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ [23] And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’ (ESV)

Because hope keeps us. Our experience of salvation and his promise already.

“Think then, ye who have tasted any thing of redeeming love, is it possible that ye may be useful in promoting the designs, and in advancing the glory of your Lord and Saviour, and will ye not do it? Shall any earthly interests or attachments prevail with you to put your light under a bushel, when, by suffering it to shine forth, you might aid others in their way to heaven? O! requite not thus your heavenly Benefactor, but join yourselves to his people without delay, and live henceforth altogether for Him who lived and died for you.” - Charles Simeon.

Not only is Hobab invited to be a partaker in the promise, when he is resistant, Moses reminds him of his value. He knows where to camp.

This is not a rejection of God’s guidance but instead recognition of how God’s will is compatible with human agency.

Just as every soul had a role in the march of Israel that day, everyone we invite is a value to the kingdom, they bring worth. Image bearers invited to purpose.

As agents of reconciliation, like Moses, we see their worth, everyone, and invite them in.

We are equipped for it. This is a call for all of us, not just the “gifted.”

**1 Peter 3:15** “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,” (ESV)

This week I had occasion to talk with a *Jehovah’s Witness*. At least I kept him for 30 minutes from other neighbors... Honest but not direct about what I do... “Emotional support human.” Some experience with the Bible.

But I kept pressing him to give me the hope... Maybe next time!

“When someone asks us why we are followers of Jesus, what is our response? The answer is certainly not because since the time we became Christians our lives have begun to work out more successfully. I cannot say that God always gives me everything I want or think that I need, nor does he always make my life run smoothly and easily. What I can say, though, is this: God has promised me eternal life in his presence, a place where I shall stand before him forever and do what I was created to do, which is to worship him. God has promised us that in view of the glory set before us, this is the very best life we can experience in this world. Eternal life will make worthwhile whatever losses we have to suffer in the present. What is more, the Lord has promised his presence with us in the midst of all of the present difficulties of life” ID

Oh that we would be so enamored with Christ that we can't help but share him.

He is the founder of our faith and its goal. He is the one who gained our salvation on the cross by his cry that “it is finished.” A salvation made ours by his Spirit. He is the one who promises to go with us, to never leave us or forsake us, to go before us, ordering our steps. He is the One who fights our battles and has already won the victory. He is the One we are to show our neighbors and friends to and say, “Here is rest for your soul. Come with me and meet this glorious Savior. Come and share the good things he has promised to all those who belong to him.” He himself is the joy that is set before us, the joy into which we will finally enter in fullness and completeness when our wandering days are done.”

“Whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same he will do to you.”

**Followers of Jesus are invited in to invite others in.**

*Live from your invitation:* Settled, secure, forgiven, and free. Ask the Spirit to give you an increasing hunger for Jesus.

*Live to invite others:* Say their name to Jesus, say his name to them. See people, pray with them, love them, because you have been loved.



The journey is just beginning for some. The excitement is yours. Some of us have been on this road a long time, may the Spirit ignite our enthusiasm afresh, give us a vision for home. That we would invite others to go.

**Numbers 10:35–36** “And whenever the Ark set out, Moses would shout, “Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered! Let them flee before you!” 36 And when the Ark was set down, he would say, “Return, O Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel (your people)!” (NLT)