

Joshua 1: 1 – 9; 1 Thessalonians 4: 13 – 18

**'Hope in bereavement'**

**Introduction ...**

When someone dies, so much changes for their family and close friends – much more than we sometimes anticipate.

- It may be that you've been concentrating on their care and support for so many hours of each day that you're now not sure what to do with your time ...
- It may be that they always did certain tasks – be that family finance, cooking, arranging holidays ... and now that has to fall to someone else
- If a child has died – the bereavement can affect the other children in unexpected ways
- If a parent has died – maybe you have become the oldest in the family and you hadn't realised how that would feel.

**Joshua**

Our first Bible reading speaks into that situation – Moses was about to die and leadership of the whole people of Israel would pass to Joshua. So not only would he miss Moses and the wisdom and stability Moses embodied ... but he also has new responsibilities ... new relationships to navigate.

Take a moment to think back ... what new things have come your way because of bereavement?

This passage from Joshua brings both advice and hope: God says to him three times: **"Be strong and courageous."**

We could think – "Yes, but it's all very well saying that ... it doesn't necessarily mean that I can do it." But the last time God says to Joshua: **"Be strong and courageous"** he adds **"For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."** We don't have to do it all on our own. God wants to help us. This can give us hope when our own strength is running out ...

**1 Thessalonians 4**

And hope is strongly present in our second Bible reading – some of the writing of St Paul. He is realistic about grief – his confidence in Jesus bringing to us life beyond death doesn't lead him to write "Do not grieve" ... but **"Do not grieve as others do who have no hope."** Grief is draining and can feel completely negative ... but hope is strengthening and brings a positive perspective amidst the loss. There is a life through and beyond death; we have not lost loved ones forever ... and we can be confident about this because of Jesus' own death and resurrection.

May each of us be blessed by God with hope from Jesus' death and resurrection and be blessed by God with strength and courage beyond our own.

**Amen.**