

Jos207 – Memorials For The Marathon – Joshua 4:1-24

Pastor Dave Shepardson Calvary Chapel Nuevo / www.wordbymail.com

Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Memorials For The Marathon.” We are going to Joshua Chapter 4 and we will study the whole chapter.

I led my first Bible study at age twenty-two. We started our first church at age thirty-two. And the funny thing is, I don’t remember back in those glory days of young service for the Lord, I don’t remember ever telling anyone, “Just keep following Jesus for the long haul. No matter what happens, no matter what you go through, never forget what Jesus Christ has done for you. Never forget *who* he is or what he has done for you.”

That’s not the language of a young warrior in the ministry. But now, at fifty-seven years old, after following Jesus for thirty-eight years and serving God in church leadership for twenty-five years, now I find myself saying – very often – “*Just keep following Jesus, no matter what, just keep serving Jesus. Never forget what the Lord has done for you. Never, never forget who the Lord is or what he has done in your life.*”

That is why we need “Memorials For The Marathon.”

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, would you reveal that to us, please? Would you take this so practical, and so critically important chapter and drive it home to us, and show us where we are building memorials for the marathon? Show us where we are distracted and wasting our time, and being deceived, Lord. Show us how to build memorials that we can go back to, that we can cling to, that we can hold on to that will drive us until the race is done. Make it come alive to us, we pray today, in your name Jesus, and for your glory, amen.*

It’s shocking to me how many people that I have followed Jesus with and how many people that I have served Jesus with and who at one time have been an integral part of a church who have just kinda “faded away” from the Lord. I assume they still believe, they’ve just kinda moved on to other things in life.

Sometimes it’s sin that drags them down its dark hole. Very often it’s the intense pain of church conflict that the enemy uses to discourage and disillusion the saints. And please remember, if the enemy ever draws you into church conflict his goal is to discourage and disillusion you and drive you away from the Lord.

But sometimes, people just kind of forget the incredible things God has done for them and the miraculous way they used to live. Life just kind of gets in the way... and as the

years pass, they find themselves further away from that cutting edge miraculous faith life that they once were living.

I understand it, I really do, and I'm not being critical or judging anyone. But can we just turn over to Philippians Chapter 3 to start this morning?

Paul the Apostle met Jesus Christ on the Road to Damascus in about 35 AD and he was killed – as far as we know – somewhere between 65-67 AD. So Paul basically had a thirty year ministry. (And if we think *we've* had a hard thirty year ministry – believe me – it's been a complete vacation compared to Paul's thirty year ministry.)

And Paul wrote something about the marathon at about twenty-five years into his ministry and it really applies to our text today in Joshua, and it really applies to the life of this church today, and it really applies to my life (and my family's life) personally today and so I trust that it really applies to your life today as well.

In Philippians Chapter 3, it's twenty-five years into Paul's ministry and only five or so years before his death.

Philippians 3:12 (NLT)

12 I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.

This word "**Perfection**" means – *to be MADE complete* – or - *brought to complete maturity*.

Though it's a slightly different word, it's very similar in meaning to the great cry from Jesus on the cross, "*Tetelestai – it is finished!*"

Paul says, I have not reached that place of completion yet, and then he says ***But I press on to POSSESS*** - the word means to get **a strangle hold** on something.

I press on to get a strangle hold - on that FOR WHICH Christ Jesus first got a strangle hold on me.

After twenty-five years of the most hard core ministry ever recorded Paul says, "*I am still pressing on at that level of intensity.*"

And then, in Philippians 3:13-14,

Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)

13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing:

*Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,
14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

With twenty-five down and only five to go the Apostle Paul is pressing harder than ever to stay in the marathon, running the race all in and all out until he reaches the end and receives the heavenly prize.

How do we do that? How do we stay in the marathon with that level of commitment and that level of intensity right up to the finish line?

Unfortunately in this one message we can't discuss all that it takes to keep running the marathon until the end. But I can tell you this one thing – you need Memorials for the Marathon.

If you really want some encouragement about how to stay in *until the end* I would recommend four series to you. “ABIDE”, “THE FUNDAMENTALS”, “GIVE UP” (interestingly) and “NEHEMIAH.”

That's a total of forty-five messages and that should give you a good start on *how* to stay in the Marathon of Faith. You can listen to – or order on CD – ALL those series at wordbymail.com or you can listen to or read all of them on the wordbymail phone app.

But today, our focus is on just one thing. You need Memorials for the Marathon. You need memorials to remind you *who* the Lord *is* in your life and *what* the Lord has *done* in your life. And you need to set up memorials of your faith for your children's benefit and for your grandchildren's benefit.

That is what Joshua Chapter 4 is about. This is not a chapter to skip over lightly. This is a chapter of Critical and practical encouragement to help keep us in the marathon and to encourage our future generations to keep running when we are done.

If you missed the last message, the Israelites crossed over the uncrossable Jordan River. It was a mighty and incredible miracle that took great faith on the people's part and great involvement on God's part.

And so we pick it up today with the Priests still standing *in* the middles of the Jordan River on *dry ground* and the people are just finishing crossing over.

Joshua 4:1-3 (NLT)

***1 When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua,
2 “Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe.***

3 Tell them, ‘Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.’ ”

Throughout the Old Testament God has Israel go through ceremonies and rituals, feast days and celebrations, sometimes to signify atonement or redemption or God’s provision or many other things about God’s character and God’s personal involvement in their lives. And all of those ceremonies and events are meant to teach both the current generation and the future generation the great truths about *who* God *is* and *what* God has *done*.

And so we continue in Joshua 4:4-6(a).

Joshua 4:4-6(a) (NLT)

4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had chosen—one from each of the tribes of Israel.

5 He told them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the Lord your God (representing Jesus Christ). *Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.*

6 We will use these stones to build a memorial . . .

A memorial in the Bible is *always* meant to be a physical sign to *remind us* and our *future generations* of the great things God has done. They are never for man or to remember something any person has done. If you look closely here in Joshua 4 you’ll see the focus is completely on the *Ark of the Covenant* which we learned last message is the supreme TYPE or representation of Jesus Christ.

When Chuck Smith taught this in the 1980’s Calvary Chapel was already a phenomenon. And **Chuck Smith** said this, right here, ***When I die some fool will want to raise a memorial to Chuck Smith. We’ll have a Chuck Smith gymnasium or something, you know. Oh God forbid. . . God keep us from that . . . Nobody needs to remember me; we need to remember the work that God has done [here].***

That is why we must have Memorials for the Marathon to remember the great work *GOD* has done and to point our children and grandchildren to - - to pass on the testimony of God’s great work in our lives.

So continuing in Joshua 4:6(b)-7.

Joshua 4:6(b)-7 (NLT)

6 . . . In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’

7 Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.”

“Dad – Pop-Pop – what do these stones mean?”

“Well, baby, they remind us that when we took the Presence of God right into the middle of that problem, that God miraculously made a way right through that flood for us.”

Guys, if the miracles that God has done in our lives are not passed to the next generation how will we continue the legacy of faith?

Continuing in Joshua 4:8.

Joshua 4:8 (NLT)

8 So the men did as Joshua had commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan River, one for each tribe, just as the Lord had told Joshua. They carried them to the place where they camped for the night and constructed the memorial there.

And not only was the memorial built on land, but God gave a reason to walk your kids over to the edge of the Jordan and tell them the story.

Joshua 4:9 (NLT)

9 Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day.

And maybe they are still there – to this day.

And in that day a father, or grandfather would take his child, or grandchild over to the edge of the Jordan River and point to the water and say, ***“you see that place in the River -Right there is a pile of Stones and those stones were piled up at the FEET of the Priests on the Day that God made this Ol’ River stand up like a WALL and let your ancestors walk RIGHT THRU it on Dry Ground and those stones are there today – to PROVE that God did it.”***

And when we take people to this same place on the Jordan River today – we say – you see that River right there? THIS is the place where God made that Ol’ River stand up like a wall and let his people pass right through it!

You know, I love to tell the old stories to my kids and now to my grandkids to remember the great things God has done and the uncrossable crossings that God has taken us through. THAT is why we need *Memorials for the Marathon*.

And then, in Joshua 4:10-14 we read,

Joshua 4:10-14 (NLT)

10 The priests who were carrying the Ark stood in the middle of the river until all of the Lord's commands that Moses had given to Joshua were carried out. Meanwhile, the people hurried across the riverbed.

11 And when everyone was safely on the other side, the priests crossed over with the Ark of the Lord as the people watched.

12 The armed warriors from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh led the Israelites across the Jordan, just as Moses had directed.

13 These armed men—about 40,000 strong—were ready for battle, and the Lord was with them as they crossed over to the plains of Jericho.

14 That day the Lord made Joshua a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites, and for the rest of his life they revered him as much as they had revered Moses.

God used this event to establish Joshua as the leader of his people. But the memorial was NEVER to Joshua.

And so now in Joshua 4:15-18,

Joshua 4:15-18 (NLT)

15 The Lord had said to Joshua,

16 "Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come up out of the riverbed." (look at the focus on the ARK)

17 So Joshua gave the command.

18 As soon as the priests carrying the Ark of the Lord's Covenant came up out of the riverbed and their feet were on high ground, the water of the Jordan returned and overflowed its banks as before.

That uncrossable crossing was a flood before the Presence of God was carried right into it and as soon as God's people had passed through it went right back to a flood state problem. But the *Presence of God* in the middle of the flood had made a way for the people to pass right through.

And notice the day and the month that this occurred.

Joshua 4:19-20 (NLT)

19 The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month (that is the exact

same day the Passover Lamb was selected 40 years ago – in preparation for the Exodus from Egypt). ***Then they camped at Gilgal, just east of Jericho.***

20 It was there at Gilgal that Joshua piled up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River.

This memorial was constructed at Gilgal and Gilgal became a base camp for Joshua (center of Operations). Israel crowned their first king here. King David was re-crowned here (after the Absalom incident) and a school of the prophets was established here. And through all those generations and through all those years Gilgal and this memorial were meant to remind the people of Israel of the great and miraculous things God had done here to make a way for them to enter the Promised Life.

And so now, *this is it*. The last four verses give us the whole lesson.

Joshua 4:21-24 (NLT)

21 Then Joshua said to the Israelites, “In the future your children will ask, ‘What do these stones mean?’

22 Then you can tell them, ‘This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’

23 For the Lord your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he (The Lord) kept it dry until you were all across, just as he (The Lord) did at the Red Sea when he (The Lord) dried it up until we had all crossed over.

24 He (The Lord) did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the Lord’s hand is powerful, and so you might fear the Lord your God forever.”

In these last two verses the Lord is the focus – seven times. And not once is *any man* the focus. Not Joshua and not even Moses. There are *no memorials to man*.

The God who parts the sea and makes the flood river stand up like a wall – that is *who* you must focus on. He alone is who you must follow.

THAT is the God who CARES for you.

THAT is the God who KEEPS HIS PROMISES.

THAT is the God who brings you VICTORY.

THAT is the God who will NEVER fail you.

THAT is the God who ALONE we serve.

No achievement of man will drive you to *stay in the marathon* and no achievement of man will drive your children and your grandchildren to *stay in the marathon*. We might think it will, but we might think too highly of ourselves.

Our job is not to build anything ourselves or build anything that *WE* would get credit for. Our job is to point to the miracles of God we have witnessed as we have followed Jesus Christ *by faith*, as God has parted the Red Sea, As God has made the flood waters stand up like a wall, as God has brought some of the most powerful people in this county to care enough about this town and this church to make sure that we have the most incredible and beautiful place possible to bring glory to the name of Jesus *HERE*.

We're calling our new church home the Miracle on 6th Street because every single aspect of it has been a full scale miracle. And as a family and as a church we are pouring our lives into the Miracle on 6th St. And as we follow the Lord across this *miraculous crossing* into the life he has for us here, God will build a memorial for himself *through us*; a memorial that will be a beacon for *God's glory*. And when our children and our grandchildren ask "What happened here? How did this happen in this little town?" we can say, "Baby – God did this! God made a way for this. God made the flood waters stand up like a wall so that we could walk straight *into the life* he had for us."

And then, here is the final lesson. In the years to come we will say, "Son or daughter – grandson or granddaughter – if God did it for us way back when, he can do it again *today* for you."

And so, have faith, stay in the race.
No matter what – keep following Jesus
No matter what – keep serving Jesus.

Never forget what the Lord has done. Never forget *who* the Lord *is* or *what* he has *accomplished in our lives*.

Look for monuments that you can set up for God's glory in your life. Then, set it up and point to it to keep you (and your future generations) in the marathon.

Let's pray. *Lord, Jesus, all for you. All for you Lord. All for you. We are in it with passion and with intensity, but Lord we pray that you would provide the strength, the miraculous strength and the direction and the provision you have already provided. And Lord, we're driven by our faith and what we have seen. We've seen you stand the flood waters up. We've seen you make a path on dry ground. We've seen you deliver miraculously – things in our lives to say "Lord, this can only be you. This can only be you Jesus. This can only be you." Lord Jesus, our hope is in you. Our hope is in you alone because of what you've done, because of who you are, because of what we know you will continue to do, Lord. Our hope in you is the anchor of our soul. We thank you and praise you. For your glory and in your name, amen.*