

Jos206 – Crossing The UnCrossable – Joshua 3:1-17

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Crossing The UnCrossable.” Joshua Chapter 3 from verse 1 to verse 17; the entire chapter.

The Children of Israel have arrived at an uncrossable crossing. And in the life of *every* Child of God – at some point – we will face an uncrossable crossing, maybe more than one.

In many ways this church is at an uncrossable crossing right now. We are on the edge of something big. We can see it – just across the road. But in many ways we have *no idea* how God is going to bring us into the New Life (as a church) that we know he has for us.

And you personally may be at an *uncrossable crossing* today – some seemingly insurmountable obstacle that you can’t see your way around or out of. Something that *somehow*, *someway* you are going to have to go through.

Take hope. Be strong and courageous and listen intentionally to God’s Word today, applying it to your life. (I can assure you that I am listening as well.)

Let’s pray. *Lord, Jesus, thank you. Thank you for just the eternal life that you’ve given us and that we live in. Thank you that we live as citizens of heaven, passing through this place, but in your Spirit, Lord, being driven by you – growing and being stronger and stronger and walking in more and more faith and peace and victory. That’s our Promised Life. And we pray today that you would show us, as we face these uncrossable crossings, these insurmountable obstacles, Lord, we pray that you would show us how. Show us how Lord. You’ve already revealed it to us in your Word, now we pray that you would make it come alive to us by your Spirit, for your glory in our lives, and in your name, Jesus, amen.*

In Joshua Chapter 3 we see God’s method for crossing the uncrossable crossings in our lives.

We start in Joshua 3:1.

**Joshua 3:1 (NLT)**

***1 Early the next morning (after the spies returned from last week) Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia Grove and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing.***

We're working on the details of our next Israel trip in the beginning of February 2018. And when we go you can be baptized in the Jordan River at this very place, where both Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land AND where Jesus was baptized by John. It is a real place and you can really go there with us.

And here – in Joshua 3:1 – God takes the Israelites right to *this* place.

Acacia Grove was about 8 miles east of the Jordan River. Not that far really to go through all the trouble to break camp and move and set-up camp again. But God needed the Israelites on the very edge of their uncrossable crossing because he needed them to *look* at it, to *see* it, and to fully come to grips with it. And so God had them camp on the edge of their uncrossable crossing for three days.

Look at Joshua 3:2.

**Joshua 3:2 (NLT)**

***2 Three days later the Israelite officers went through the camp,***

Three times in the first three chapters God uses three days to prepare the people. And we talked about the fact that this time period (three days) becomes (in the Bible) a representation of death, burial and resurrection to new life.

And for this three days God wants his people to prepare by staring at the impossibility of the obstacle they must cross in order to enter the Promised Life. At this point God has not told Joshua or the people *how* this is going to happen.

And we as a church can relate to this because God *has* told *us* to prepare to move into a new season of life as a church. But in many ways, God *has not* told you *how* that is going to happen.

And maybe today you are feeling the same way about some uncrossable crossing in your own life.

And God's direction here in Joshua 3 is go camp on the edge of that *situation*. Stand and gaze that *insurmountable problem* and get it clear in your mind there is absolutely no *logical way*, there is absolutely no *human way* that you can possibly cross that obstacle in front of you.

Because that is exactly the point where God brought Israel as they stared at the uncrossable Jordan for three days – *knowing* that God had told them they would cross it and *knowing* there was no human way for that to happen.

And we must get to that same place because at *that* place some of the worst traits of our sin nature begin to be removed.

Guys, our “self-confidence” and “self-reliance” only prevent us from following Jesus into the Promised Life.

In Mark 8:34 Jesus said,

**Mark 8:34 (ESV);**

***34 . . . “If anyone would come after me, let him deny [SELF] and take up his cross and follow me.***

Coming to grips with the fact that we *cannot fix* this problem *our self*, we *cannot cross* this obstacle *our self*, prepares us to be willing to follow Jesus right into that *uncrossable crossing*.

Again Joshua 3:2-3

**Joshua 3:2 & 3 (NLT)**

***2 Three days later the Israelite officers went through the camp, 3 giving these instructions to the people: “When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, move out from your positions and follow them.***

The absolute central focus in this miraculous event is the “Ark of the Covenant.” The Ark of the Covenant is the “Chest” (box) that contained the representations of *God’s presence* with his people.

The top of the “Chest” is called “The Mercy Seat” where the Golden Cherubim face each other and between the Golden Cherubim hovers the “Shekinah Glory” – the *physical presence* of God.

And in this single event in Chapters 3 and 4 the Ark is referred to seventeen times!

When God really wants us to focus on something in a text he repeats it and most often God repeats something important three times. In this text our focus is directed to the Ark seventeen times – *five times more* than the normal repetition the Bible uses, which makes it very, very clear that God wants his people totally and completely focused on the Ark of the Covenant.

*Why?*

Because the Ark of the Covenant is the supreme type – the supreme picture – in the Old Testament of Jesus Christ. Everything about the Ark speaks of who Jesus Christ is.

The Ark is a Chest made of gold and wood representing the humanity and deity of Christ. It's covered with the solid gold mercy seat where the blood for atonement of sin is sprinkled and where the Glory of God resides.

Inside are three things:  
the LAW – fulfilled “in” Christ  
the STAFF – that “resurrected” New Life  
the “BREAD OF LIFE” – that sustains God’s People.

Everything about the Ark of the Covenant speaks of Jesus Christ and seventeen times in this text the Ark is the focus, because only as Israel kept their sights set on the Ark would they be able to cross the uncrossable Jordan and enter the Promised Land. And only as *we* keep our sights set on Jesus Christ (whom the Ark represents) will *we* be able to cross our *uncrossable obstacle* and enter our Promised Life.

#### **Hebrews 12:1–2 (NLT)**

*1 . . . let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.*

*2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith . . .*

If you are going to cross the uncrossable you must *never* lose sight of Jesus Christ. Keep your eyes firmly fixed on Jesus alone and follow *him* straight across the uncrossable.

And the focus on the Ark continues in Joshua 3:4.

#### **Joshua 3:4 (NLT)**

*4 Since you have never traveled this way before, they (the Priests with the Ark) will guide you. Stay about a half mile behind them, keeping a clear distance between you and the Ark. Make sure you don't come any closer.”*

Notice the first sentence: *you have never traveled THIS WAY before.*

The phrase “*this way*” can mean “*on this path*” – or – “*in this manner.*” I think it is pretty obvious they had never travelled “on this path” before (through the Jordan River.) So I like the idea that God is saying, “*You have never travelled in this manner (in this way) before*” because when you finally decide to truly follow Jesus Christ into the Promised Life, man, that is a new way to travel. You have not travelled in this way before and to

travel in this manner you must keep your eyes firmly fixed on Christ alone, following him by faith and not by sight.

And the reason for staying a half mile away from the Ark, I think, is first for a practical reason. Because for that many people to keep their eyes fixed on the Ark they had to stay back and maybe in kind of a semi-circle so everyone could actually *see* the ark. Plus, the Ark was so holy and there was such *reverence and respect* for it that the people learned to never treat it casually.

And then, the crucial next step in crossing the uncrossable.

### **Joshua 3:5 (NLT)**

***5 Then Joshua told the people, “Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do great wonders among you.”***

“*Purify Yourselves*” is the Hebrew *QA-DOSH* – which means (in a *positional sense*) – “*to be (or to be made) HOLY.*” In a practical sense it means – to be set apart for God’s use, to be consecrated to God.

And notice it is *purify yourselves*. This is not the positional holiness given to us by God through our faith in Jesus Christ. This is a practical holiness that involves *our* responsibility – *our* actions - and *our* obedience.

***SET YOURSELF APART*** - For God – ***PURIFY yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do great wonders among you***

Just like keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, this is our role, this is our responsibility.

We *just* Read in **Hebrews 12:1** . . . ***let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up . . .***

We cannot show up on the edge of our uncrossable crossing desperately needing a miracle and say to God “***Please don’t ask me to DO anything for you, for your Glory - I just need you to do this miracle for me***”

***“Don’t ask me to change anything in my life, for your Glory – Can you just give me this miracle so I can go on living like I want to.”***

Who do we think we are? And  
Who do we think God is?

God says – *Purify yourself - set yourself apart for my glory* and **THEN** - *you'll see your miracle.*

Then in Joshua 3:6 things really get rolling.

**Joshua 3:6 (NLT)**

***6 In the morning Joshua said to the priests, “Lift up the Ark of the Covenant and lead the people across the river.” And so they started out and went ahead of the people.***

The priests are not crossing the river at this point. They're just preparing. It took some time for the priests to get the Ark ready because the Lord had given very specific instructions about *how* to move it.

So while the priests are preparing the Ark and getting our ahead of the people the Lord has some strong encouragement for Joshua in Joshua 3:7.

**Joshua 3:7 (NLT)**

***7 The Lord told Joshua, “Today I will begin to make you a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites. They will know that I am with you, just as I was with Moses.***

Guys, don't ever underestimate the power of encouragement in the lives of those who are following Jesus with you because much of God's Word is written to give us strong encouragement.

But then – after God's encouragement – comes God's test.

**Joshua 3:8 (NLT)**

***8 (the Lord told Joshua) Give this command to the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant: ‘When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river and stop there.’ ”***

This is a test of *faith and obedience* because there is no evidence yet that God has told Joshua *how* this is all going to work. The Lord just commands Joshua take the representation of Jesus Christ (the Ark), carry it right into that uncrossable obstacle and then just stand there.

The Jordan is the uncrossable obstacle standing in the way of God's people. The Ark is the representation of Jesus Christ and God's Word to his people is when you come to an insurmountable obstacle and you can't see any possible way through it get your encouragement from God. Be obedient to God. By faith, take Jesus Christ right into that problem with you and then wait for the miracle working God to make a way for you to cross the uncrossable!

God first gives us a PROMISE  
Then a COMMAND to purify ourselves *for his glory*  
Then he gives us more ENCOURAGEMENT  
Then a test of faith and obedience  
and *then* God gives us the MIRACLE that we need!

So Joshua had received from the Lord first encouragement and then a test of obedience. And so Joshua is going to give the people of God first encouragement and then a test of obedience. (Great leadership lesson. What God does to you and for you, you pass on to the people God has given you responsibility for.)

**Joshua 3:9–10 (NLT)**

***9 So Joshua told the Israelites, “Come and listen to what the Lord your God says.  
10 Today you will know that the living God is among you (same encouragement God gave Joshua). He (The Lord) will surely drive out the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites ahead of you.***

Just as God gave Joshua strong encouragement for victory, Joshua gives the people strong encouragement for victory.

Today you will KNOW that God is with you and that he will give you VICTORY over your enemies. God began his work in his people and God would be faithful to complete it.

**JUST** as He has **promised** US in **Philippians 1:6** ***“He who has begun a good work in you will be FAITHFUL to COMPLETE it.”***

Our God is faithful to *accomplish* all that he has begun in our lives. Our role is to be faithfully obedient to his faithful promises.

Now – some more encouragement for the people and then the *test* of obedience.

**Joshua 3:11–13 (NLT)**

***11 Look, the Ark of the Covenant, which belongs to the Lord of the whole earth (representing Jesus Christ), will lead you across the Jordan River! (Across that uncrossable obstacle.)***

***12 Now choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe.***

***13 The priests will carry the Ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth. As soon as their feet touch the water, the flow of water will be cut off upstream, and the river will stand up like a wall.”***

And so finally we learn HOW this miracle is going to occur. When the priests carry the presence of God right into the problem, as soon as they exhibit the *faith* that brings that *action*, the flow of that problem will be miraculously *cut off*. The flood that you think is going to take you out, it will stand up like a wall to make a way for you to move straight through it and it will be a total miracle by *God alone*.

But still we MUST

Believe God's PROMISE

PURIFY our lives for his glory

and then WALK BY FAITH with Jesus Christ STRAIGHT INTO the middle of that *uncrossable obstacle*.

Then, and only then, will we see God bring a miracle that will allow us to cross the uncrossable.

And *that* is exactly what the people of God *did* in order to enter the Promised Life.

### **Joshua 3:14–17 (NLT)**

***14 So the people left their camp to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them.***

***15 It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge,***

***16 the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho.***

***17 Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Lord's Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground.***

Guys, this spot is only six miles from Jericho and certainly the enemy at Jericho was watching the most incredible miracle they had ever witnessed as one million people crossed the flood stage Jordan "***on dry ground***" and the enemy KNEW God was coming.

And we have an enemy today who is watching for signs of God coming in our lives. Our enemy knows when he has us "on the ropes" and he knows when "God is coming at him" in our lives.

God has promised us victory over the obstacles AND over the enemies that stand between us and the Promised Life.



But please hear me when I say that promise of victory is *conditional*. We can be absolutely assured of God's victory in our lives IF – IF – IF we will follow Jesus Christ obsessively with courageous faith and fearless obedience, keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus Christ, taking the Presence of the Lord straight into that insurmountable obstacle – then standing there and continuing to stand until God brings a miracle for us to *cross the uncrossable*.

Let's pray. *Lord, what a great life you've given us! Lord, we don't live circumstantially. We don't live materially. We don't live temporally. We live eternally. We live spiritually. We live as not only your citizens but your sons and daughters. The fight we fight is an eternal and spiritual one. The victories, Lord, go beyond this world. Our faith brings us to victories that carry us to more victories and more victories until we're absolutely addicted to walking in victory with you, Lord. That's the Promised Life. And so, Lord, take us in to the flood stage river. Go ahead. And we'll carry you in there, trusting your promises, having been prepared, purified, and we'll stand with you on the edge of that problem until we see those flood waters make a wall for us and allow us to pass through. Lord it's not just about this church. It certainly is not about me, it's about each of us, Lord. Bring us to this level of faith. Show us your glory in mighty victories we pray for your sake and in your name, Jesus. Amen.*