

Joshua 3:1-13; 4:1-7, 18-24

Sermon Discussion Guide

Passage Summary

Israel has finally arrived at the edge of the Promised Land. After years of wandering, the promise God made long ago is now quite literally on the other side of the river. There is only one problem: **the Jordan is at flood stage**. God could have brought His people to the river when the water was low. He could have made the way obvious before asking them to move. Instead, He brings them to an obstacle they cannot overcome themselves and calls them to trust Him.

God instructs the people to follow the ark of the covenant as it goes before them. The ark represented God's presence among His people, and the distance between the ark and Israel ensured that everyone could see clearly what God was doing. Israel was not charging ahead and asking God to follow. God was going before them. The priests were then commanded to carry the ark into the Jordan and stand still. Only as their feet entered the water would God stop the river and provide dry ground. The point could hardly be missed: Israel did not accomplish this. Their leaders did not engineer it. Their strength did not overcome the river. God made the way.

This is the first picture of faith in the passage: **faith moves forward even while the river is still flowing**. Faith does not mean knowing exactly how God will resolve every circumstance. It means knowing the One who goes before us. When the future is uncertain and the obstacle still stands in front of us, our confidence is not in our ability to manage what comes next. It is in the character and presence of the God who has promised to be with His people.

But once Israel crosses the Jordan, God does not want them simply to move on. He tells Joshua to choose twelve men who will take twelve stones from the river and build a memorial. Why? Because God knows how easily His people forget. Those stones would become physical reminders of a moment when God came near and did what Israel could never have done for itself. When future circumstances made them question His faithfulness, they could look backward and remember: This is who our God has always been. Israel already had a long history of such stories. God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea, sustained them in the wilderness, and now carried them across the Jordan. Their identity was being formed by remembering the mighty acts of God.

The same is true for us. We need reminders of the places where God has met us. There are seasons when we wandered and He pursued us. Seasons when we suffered and

He sustained us. Seasons when we were afraid and He remained near. Times when we sinned and discovered again the depth of His mercy. Remembering God's past faithfulness strengthens our faith when the next river begins to rise.

Finally, God tells Israel that these stones are not merely for them. One day their children will ask, "What do these stones mean?" And when they do, God's people are to tell the story. The memorial creates an opportunity for one generation to tell the next about the faithfulness of God. Their children need to know that they belong to a story of redemption...to a God who rescues, provides, keeps His promises, and brings His people home.

We understand that story even more fully because we know where it ultimately leads. The God who delivered Israel through the waters has accomplished an even greater deliverance through Jesus. Christ entered into death for us, bore our sin, reconciled us to the Father, and rose again so that His people might have life. We therefore have a story worth remembering and repeating. We naturally pass along the things that capture our hearts. We teach our children traditions, songs, loyalties, and stories about the things we love. How much more should the grace of Jesus become part of the ordinary language and rhythm of our homes? God has been faithful.

Reflection Questions

Faith That Moves Forward

1. Israel had to approach the Jordan while the river was still flowing.
 - Where in your life are you currently waiting for God to "stop the water" before you are willing to trust or obey Him?
2. God deliberately made it clear that **He** was the One making a way through the Jordan.
 - Where are you most tempted to place your confidence in something created: your abilities, money, career, relationships, plans, or control, rather than God Himself?
3. The ark went before Israel into a place they had never been.
 - What unknown are you facing right now?
 - How does knowing that God goes with His people change the way you face it?
4. Faith does not always mean knowing what God is going to do. Often it means trusting who God is when we don't know what He will do.
 - Which of those is harder for you? Why?

Faith That Looks Back

5. God commanded Israel to build a memorial because He knew they would need to remember.

- Why do you think we so easily forget God's faithfulness when new difficulties arise?
6. If you were asked to choose a few "stones of remembrance" from your own life, what would they represent?
- A season God sustained you?
 - A prayer He answered?
 - A time He brought you back after wandering?
 - A moment His grace became especially real?
7. What practical reminders could you build into your life so that you do not forget God's goodness when the next difficult season comes?

Faith That Tells the Story

8. God expected the children to notice the stones and ask, *"What do these mean?"*
- What are the visible practices in your life or home that might cause someone else to ask about your faith?
9. We naturally teach the next generation about the things we love: our teams, traditions, hobbies, music, and interests.
- If someone watched the rhythms of your life, what would they conclude has captured your heart?
 - Where does Jesus fit within that picture?
10. What stories of God's faithfulness do your children, grandchildren, friends, or younger believers need to hear from you?
11. Who helped tell you the story of Jesus?
- What did they do that made the gospel beautiful or memorable to you?

Closing Prayer Points

1. Trust God While the River Is Still Flowing

- Bring before God the circumstances that feel uncertain or impossible.
- Confess the places where fear has kept you from trusting Him.
- Ask for courage to take the next faithful step even before you can see how God will make a way.

2. Place Our Confidence in God Alone

- Confess the created things you are tempted to trust for security or control.
- Thank God that He goes before His people and remains with them.
- Ask for faith rooted in His character rather than in favorable circumstances.

3. Remember God's Faithfulness

- Spend time thanking God for specific ways He has sustained, rescued, provided for, corrected, and pursued you.
- Praise Him for the people and circumstances He has used to remind you of His grace.

- Ask the Spirit to help you remember yesterday's faithfulness when facing tomorrow's uncertainty.

4. Remember Our Greatest Deliverance

- Thank Jesus for doing what we could never do for ourselves.
- Praise Him for bearing our sin, reconciling us to the Father, and bringing us from death to life.
- Ask that the cross and resurrection would remain the defining story of your life.

5. Tell the Next Generation

- Pray for children, grandchildren, students, and younger believers by name.
- Pray that the rhythms of your home and life would make the goodness of Jesus visible and compelling.

6. Become Reminders of Grace to One Another

- Ask God to make your community group or friends a place where people regularly remind one another of His faithfulness.
- Pray for courage to share both struggles and stories of God's provision.
- Ask that when someone is unable to see God's goodness clearly, others would help them remember.