

November 6<sup>th</sup> 2022 | Joshua 4

God instructs Israel to do something pretty amazing when they are about to enter into the promise land. We find the story in Joshua 4. Now this is not the first time the nation was lead to the edge of the promise land. They had been there once before. They sent 12 spies in and **due to a lack of trust** the nation did not feel like they could take the promise land. They walked up to the edge and decided that God could not be fully trusted. This unbelief led to 40 years wandering in the desert. That time of wandering is now over. The nation is back at the edge of the promise land. Now is the time to finally enter. To trust God this time and go experience every part that God has for them. To enter Israel had to cross the Jordan river. God did not want them to forget this moment.

**Joshua 4:1-7 ESV**

- (1) When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, **the LORD said** to Joshua,
- (2) "Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man,
- (3) and command them, saying, '**Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan**, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.'"
- (4) Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe.
- (5) And Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel,
- (6) **that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?'**
- (7) **then you shall tell them** that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. **So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."**

Notice the command comes straight from God. God wants Israel to take 12 stones and set them up. He wants this stack of stones to be a sign. The kids are going to ask about it. Why are these stones here? God wants these stones to be a memorial forever. He wants it to be a remembrance that God split the Jordan for them. The ark led them in, God had gone in front of them once again. He continually shows His faithfulness and made a way for them. Israel did just what God asked.

**Joshua 4:20-23 ESV**

- (20) And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal.
- (21) And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?'
- (22) then you shall let your children know, '**Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.**'
- (23) For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, **as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea**, which he dried up for us until we passed over,

The stones were meant to be a memorial for all future generations. He wanted parents to explain what they meant to their children. Each generation proclaim God's great work to the next.

God wanted these stones to be a reminder of what He did at the Jordan River. This was a memorial to God's faithfulness. He wanted parents to tell their kids of how God can lead and make a way where there seems to be no way. To talk of God's power and care. He split the Jordan just like he split the red sea. God will always be faithful, so walk with Him. Verse 24 tells us specifically God's desire of what that monument meant.

### Joshua 4:24 ESV

(24) **so that all the peoples** of the earth may know that the **hand of the LORD is mighty**, that you may **fear the LORD your God forever.**"

God wanted all people of the earth to know that the hand of God is mighty. He has the power to split the sea. He has the power to lead. He is able to conquer the promised land. He wants to lead us if we will we just walk in His faithfulness.

His hand is mighty so we should fear Him. We should have a reverential awe of who God is. The clearer we see God's hand as mighty the more we will fear Him. **Fear dictates a response.** We know this. I fear spiders so I kill them. My fear leads to action. Part of fearing God is living in response to that fear. If we could see God for who He is, then we would live in response to that.

This passage has been on my heart for the past few weeks. As I prayed about accepting the role of Senior pastor it has been an opportunity to stack up some stones. To take a marker of how faithful God has been. I want to share parts of my story through this lens. God has been so faithful.

### Colossians 2:6-8 ESV

(6) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

(7) **rooted** and **built up** in Him and **established** in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

(8) See to it that no one takes you captive **by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition**, according to the elemental spirits of the world, **and not according to Christ.**

Human reason, philosophies, traditions, theological camps will all fail if they are not focused on truth and about Christ. This side said one thing the other side said something else.

Everything else will fail. Humans will let you down and be wrong. **We must pursue truth from the word of God.**

### Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV

(20) **Now to Him** who is able to do **far more abundantly than all that we ask or think**, according to the power at work within us,

(21) **to Him be glory in the church** and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

God does far more abundantly than anything we can ask or imagine. He will be glorified. We just get to go along for the ride. He calls us, equips us, and enables us to serve Him. Following that direction can be scary, but it is not about us. He is the one who is able to do far more than we ever imagined.

That first summer working here was in 2008. It was during those two years that God really worked on my heart to see His grace through a new lens. To see that salvation was fully accomplished by Jesus shed blood on the cross. Salvation is secured because of what Christ did not by my ability to hold onto it. As grace unfolded, all of a sudden passages of scripture started clicking into place like never before.

### The prodigal son:

#### Luke 15:11 ESV

(11) And He said, **“There was a man who had two sons.**

The story is about a son, not how to become a son. It is a story of fellowship, not a story of salvation. Passages that would beat me up and make me doubt my salvation now became comforting truths. The story became about a loving gracious Father.

#### Luke 15:20 ESV

(20) **And he arose and came to his Father. But while he was still a long way off, his Father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.**

God started to reveal His character to me. He is loving, gracious, caring, and merciful. He is also just. Jesus’ sacrifice started to become magnified. He accomplished my salvation. This life of living for Him is a joy, it is a privilege not a drudgery or something to be forced.

### 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 ESV

(1) Therefore, **having this ministry by the mercy of God**, we do not lose heart.

(2) But we have renounced **disgraceful, underhanded ways**. We refuse **to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word**, but by the **open statement of the truth** we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

### 2 Corinthians 4:3-7 ESV

(3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

(4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

(5) **For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord**, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

(6) For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

(7) **But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**

The power comes from God. We just go along for the ride. **We must just teach the word and proclaim Christ.**

**He is faithful. It is not about us. Its not about who the Jar of clay is, it has always been about the God who is at work.**

### 1 Corinthians 3:4-7 ESV

- (4) For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?
- (5) **What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.**
- (6) I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the growth.**
- (7) **So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.**

As a body we have strived to keep this focus. It is not about us. It is not some formula; it is God's amazing grace. He is the one who gives the growth. The instrument He chooses to do the work is just a clay pot. God is the one who gives the growth. It is the Spirit that teaches. He uses us to do it, but it has to be Him and His power for it to mean anything.

It is not about a man. **It wasn't about Jim, and its not about me.** It is about an amazing God. A God who has revealed Himself in His word. A God who went to a cross to shed His blood as the perfect sacrifice, and the amazing truth that you and I have the amazing opportunity to have a relationship with Him. We gather to study His word, and grow in our relationship with Him. It doesn't matter where you are in that journey, mature, immature, growing or stalled out, lets look to Christ and grow.

This is what Paul focused his ministry on.

### Colossians 1:24-29 ESV

- (24) Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church,
- (25) **of which I became a minister** according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, **to make the word of God fully known,**
- (26) the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.
- (27) To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
- (28) **Him we proclaim,** warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.**
- (29) **For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.**

Paul wanted to make the word of God fully known. To teach it in clear precise ways so that it can be applied. True Bible Study is not done, until it reaches application that can only be lived out through the power of the Holy Spirit.

He proclaimed Christ, with the goal of helping believers mature in Christ. Notice Paul toiled and worked hard toward that goal, but notice who energized him. He toiled with His energy. It is God who is at work.

**Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV**

- (8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,  
(9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast.  
(10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, **that we should walk in them.**

**Lamentations 3:22-25 ESV**

- (22) **The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;** His mercies never come to an end;  
(23) they are new every morning; **great is your faithfulness.**  
(24) “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in Him.”  
(25) **The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.**