

# Coming to the river in flood

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, everyone. It's good to see everyone this morning. And hopefully we will have a better time in inciting God's words this morning.

I just want to say that in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, speaking about the Old Testament, it says that these things happen to them as examples to us.

And they were written down for our instructions. So what we have this morning, the story of the crossing of the Jordan, will really be instructions to us as we live our Christian life here.

And the passage we're looking at this morning is Joshua chapter 3. I put down 1 to 6, but actually we'll be going a bit farther than that. So Joshua chapter 3, starting at verse 1.

Is our reading. And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and they removed from Shittim and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

[ 1 : 13 ] And it came to pass that after three days that the officers went through the host, or through the camp, and they commanded the people, saying, when you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, the priest, the Levites bearing it, then you shall remove from your place and go after it.

Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye may go.

For ye have not passed this way before. And Joshua said to the people, Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

And Joshua spoke unto the priest, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

And the Lord said to Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, and that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I shall be with you.

[ 2 : 30 ] And thou shalt command the priest to bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye come to the brink of the water of the Jordan, he shall stand still in the water. And then going over to verse 15, And as they bear the ark, where they came to the Jordan, and as the feet of the priests that bear the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, the Jordan overflowed, was overflowing, all its banks at the time of harvest, that the water which came down from above stood and rose up in a heap.

Very far from the city of Adam, that is beside Zeratán, and those that came down towards the sea of the plain, even the salt sea failed, and were cut off, and the people passed over against Jericho.

They passed over the water. So the Israelites, they had a long journey in the wilderness to take possession of the promised land.

And now they have come to cross the Jordan. And Joshua and the people came to the river, and they camped there for three days, as we read in verses 1 and 2.

And it was the harvest time of the year, and the Jordan was rushing with torrents of water, verse 15, and the river was overflowing at the time.

[ 4 : 14 ] And the Israelites, they faced a river that was seemingly impossible to cross. And the three days delay that they had there, camped, it would impress upon them the difficulty of the situation.

They no longer had the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire that led them all the way in miraculously, but now instead, every morning that they got up, they could see the river in flood before them.

And they were also aware that their fathers had failed to cross into the land, and they ended up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and going round and round.

And so ahead of them was the river, and behind them was a memory of the painful wandering that they had. And really, there was only one way to go, and that was forward. And the Bible tells us that.

There was one way to go. And the Bible says, forgetting what is behind. And each of us have in our lives something that holds us up from going forward.

[ 5 : 25 ] Hebrews 12 tells us that there is weight that holds us up, and there is sin that entangles us. And whatever is before you, you or me, it's not there to stop us.

It's there to be overcome and to go forward, and it may be used to drive us forward in the problems we have.

And we can learn the lessons from this story. And one of the lessons is this, that we go in to possess the land, to possess it.

And that is to possess what is ours in Christ. We go on to fight the good fight of faith. There were many battles ahead in Canaan for the Israelites.

Many difficulties to overcome. And as we go forward, we are going to have many battles and to fight and things to overcome.

[ 6 : 27 ] But we're fighting those battles from a place of victory because that victory is in Christ. The Bible tells us that we are complete in Him, that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ, that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

This is our spiritual position in Christ. And that is true of every believer in Christ. But the question is this, what does that mean practically to me and you today in our day-to-day situation, to take possession of what is ours in Christ?

Christ. Well, those words, ye have not passed that we read in verse 4, ye have not passed this way before. We know that we cannot tell what's ahead.

We cannot tell the future. We don't know how things are going to work out. We can't tell. But it works out this way when we take possession of our possessions.

It's that we can know something for sure. we can know that God knows what will happen in the future. And God knows and God cares how things will work out and how things will end up.

[ 7 : 53 ] And we can trust God who has promised us to lead us through the difficult waters. Isaiah 43, verse 2 and verse 5, you know, speaks there, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

That is a promise for everyone in Christ. And you know, do not be afraid, it says there in verse 5, for our possession is not what the world offers us.

We have not the fear. We should not have the fear that the world has. Do not be afraid, but take possession of the things that are yours in Christ.

It reminds me of a story, a true story. I know it well because I had neighbours and it was them actually, that we had neighbours and they had no transport.

They had no way of getting up and down to town. And one day, they won a car in the competition. And it was one of these competitions where you put an axe where the ball was and they won a car.

[ 9 : 00 ] But the only problem then was that they couldn't drive. And the car arrived and it was parked outside their house for quite some time. But eventually, they started to drive the car and they drove the car up to the top of their driveway, which was a long driveway.

It was about half a mile, I suppose. But when they got to the main road, the main road was in their problem and it became a big problem for them.

So, if they were to go anywhere, they would come out of the house, they'd get into the car, they'd drive up to the main road and you'd find them sitting in the car at the main road.

And then suddenly, a taxi would come, they'd get out of the car into the taxi and it was the same way back. The taxi would drop them at the top, back into their car and drive home.

But that was as far as they got. There was something in the way that stopped them from going and getting their, and it was the driving test. It was just the fact of meeting another car on the main road.

[ 10 : 05 ] They never got over it. They never got beyond where they could have gone. There was something that blocked their way. And you know, there was that test.

There was that test in the back of their mind. But you know, is there something in my life or something in your life that God has allowed to test us?

And that it seems to be too big for us to go on before us. Now I'm not saying any problem that we face because I know people here and myself and everyone, we've all faced problems and none of them problems are easy and some people have enormous problems.

Some people don't actually have so big problems. But we all have problems and the problems have to be got over. And you know, it says there in that passage, you have not passed this way before.

There's really something big in that ahead of you. You have not passed this way before. And you know, when we read those words, you have not passed this way before, it implies caution.

[11:18] I think there's caution in there. It's something that you can't bulldoze through. You can't get a bulldozer from your problem and just plow through it. We see here that they waited three days.

Three days they were looking, you know, in God's time, they were looking for guidance to get ready to take on this problem. You know, your problem could be with you three days.

You could be serious. It could be with you three weeks. It could be a lifetime that you have to bear what you're bearing, but it's, it's the grace of God will be with you through it all.

And these words, you have not passed this way before. There's caution there. But there's something more there. There is opportunity. There is an opportunity for you and for me, whatever we're facing, that that can actually be the driving force behind us and the testimony that God is really at work in our life.

There is opportunity in the situation that God can use for his glory. And, you know, we might feel that we are unqualified for the task that's before us.

[12:34] You may see the task and you might say, that is too hard. I haven't got the education. I wasn't in college. You know, how am I going to do that or whatever?

Whatever it is. You know, you may feel unqualified. And when you think of Joshua, I mean, he may have felt unqualified.

He may have felt the pressure of taking over after Moses. Look at Moses like he was a massive figure. There was none like Moses.

And here, it was handed on to Joshua to take the baton after him. And Joshua might have felt that pressure that we often feel. I don't, I'm not qualified.

But Joshua could take comfort in this and so can we, that the Lord was not calling him to something without enabling him to do it. And Joshua had three reasons why he could be strong and courageous.

[13:36] And these three reasons ring true for us today, for you today. And the three reasons are found in chapter one.

And I'm going to list them out. The first one was this, he had God's promise. And the second one is this, he had God's word. And the third one is this, he had God's presence.

Now there might be more, but he had God's promise, he had God's word, and he had God's presence. The first one is this, in chapter one and verses five and six, the promise he was given that there'd be no one able to stand against him, that he would have a sure victory.

That's the first promise. And that is the promise to every believer in Christ. If you are in Christ, take possession of the very fact that your victory is in Christ.

This morning, we remember the Lord, all that he did. We remembered him, by taking the bread and the wine. Our victory is in what Christ did, nothing to do with what we did.

[14:42] Our victory is in Christ. What a possession that is to take possession of this morning. And then, the second one is found in, just in chapter one again.

He had God's word. It was a safe guide. You can read that yourself. God's word. He was to meditate God's word, meditate upon it, and take every word and put it into practice to obey the word, to do what the word said.

And then, that was a guarantee of a safe guide. And Jesus said, in Luke 11, 28, he said, the greatest blessing that you and I can have in our life is this, to hear the word of God and to obey it. That is the greatest blessing that we can have in our life. And the third was this, and that applies to us today. God's presence in chapter one, verses five and verse nine, of a sustaining power, the power of God, the presence of God.

The promise of the presence of God in chapter one, verse five, was a promise to Joshua. It's not just a promise to Joshua. It's a promise to us today.

[15:58] And what a promise it is. You know, the Lord said to Joshua, I will not leave you or abandon you. And as believers in 2003, heading into 2023, 2023, heading into 2024, we should take possession of the promise because we are promised the Holy Spirit in us and his help in our life.

and just as it is promised to Joshua, it's just as true for us in our lives right now. We have the assurance of this from Jesus' words.

When he spoke before he ascended up into heaven, he said, remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

In Matthew 28, 20. That is our possession in Christ, the presence of God with us. And God gave Joshua instructions for crossing the river.

Joshua told the people, sanctify yourselves. He told the people, when the Ark of the Covenant moves, you move after it.

[ 17 : 14 ] And the Ark of the Covenant speaks and is a picture of Christ. We could go to the end today, we could be a long time here, if we took everything about the Ark and see that it speaks about everything about Christ.

What it's made of speaks about Christ. The mercy seat on the cover, the contents within, everything about it speaks and is a picture. It's called the type of Christ.

That's what the Ark of the Covenant is. And they were told to go after the Ark of the Covenant and to look to that. And the requirement was, sanctify yourselves.

And that's from all that would hinder you, that Hebrews 12 talks about, there are things we need to cast off to go on. If you hang on to the things you have, you'll be stuck.

But there are things that you and I know in our life that are hindering us from going forward.

Hebrews says, lay aside every weight and the sin that entangles us and let us run the race that is set before you, looking to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of your faith.

[ 18 : 24 ] Not yourself. You're looking to him. You know, follow the Ark, that was the command, and take everything that hinders and cast it off. And we will have things that hinder us.

Don't think there is perfection. The psalmist David, in Psalm 32 and verse 3, he spoke about things that hindered him in his life.

And I think it's interesting what he said in Psalm 32 and verse 3. And I think it was in relation to his sin with Bathsheba.

He said, when I kept silent, my bones wax old in my body. That for the Christian, the worst thing you can have is to have something in your life that you haven't confessed that's broken your fellowship with God.

What a terrible existence you have because you're not living in the possession you should be living of Christ living in you. And that fellowship with God, you can go and confess your sin.

[ 19 : 30 ] And David said, when I confess my sin, God forgave me. And then he said, now that he was right with God, he said, the floods of great water will not destroy me.

Just like here. The floods were a problem, but when you commit everything to God, and when you go forward with God, you'll go through the flood.

You'll go to take possession of what is yours in Christ. We are to follow Christ. He's the author and finisher of our faith. And when the ark moved, they were to move and they were told to keep a space of 2,000 cubits.

Now, if you read, probably commentators, they might suggest that there was a reverence in that and that is true to a point, that there was a reverence to keep that space.

But what really, why was the space there? There shall be a space between you and the ark, about 2,000 cubits by measure.

[ 20 : 42 ] Come not near it, that ye may know the way by which ye are to go, for ye have not passed this way before. So the reason is given why the space is there.

The reason is, come not near it, that you might know the way that you are to go because you have not passed this way before.

In this difficult situation, you need to know the way to go. And the way to go is to look to Christ, to look to Jesus, because you have not passed this way before.

You need his guidance more than ever and you are to look to him to guide you through. That was a space. There was almost 2 million, I don't know how many people were there to cross that Jordan that day.

I think it could have been around 2 million people. And if they all crowded together, they would lose the way. So they had the ark lead them and then they had the space so everyone could see the ark going ahead where they had to go to cross the Jordan.

[ 21 : 44 ] That was clear and when they followed the ark, the water opened up and they followed away and they kept the space looking at the ark. We are not to be looking to ourselves, we are to be looking to the Lord constantly for direction.

And the verse tells us it was because they had not passed this way before, they needed the Lord's guidance through it. And that difficulty in your life, you need the Lord's guidance to go through whatever you're going through today or in the future.

And the ark was leading them and they passed on dry ground. And the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, they touched the overflowing waters on the bank and the river stopped flowing.

And they went over across on dry ground into the promised land and they took possession of it. And Joshua 21, 43 just gives us the faithfulness of God when it says that they possessed all the land that God had promised them.

God brought his promise to pass. And I was reading this and I was wondering what was the, what way I put to the end of it and I was saying, would I be able to get my point across this morning?

[ 23 : 07 ] And I, I, I somehow came to Deuteronomy and chapter 11. And I'm going to this morning use Deuteronomy chapter 11 to sum up the point that I'm trying to get across this morning and the instruction that we have from God's word.

I'm going to, to sum it up with these three verses from Deuteronomy chapter 11 and starting in verse 10.

And I'm going to go, kind of go through the verse as such. For the, this is verse 10. For the land wherein thou goest to possess it is not as the land of Egypt from whence you came out.

So, I said the ark was a picture of Christ. Well, the land of Egypt is always a picture of the world in our Bible. It's a picture of the world system and how the world system works.

So, it's the ways of the world. And what is said in this verse in the chapter is this, the land that you go in to possess, what is yours in Christ, is not the same as the land you came out of.

[ 24 : 23 ] You came out of the world, you came into Christ, you left your old life behind and you came into that new life in Christ. Don't think now that things work the same as just when you were in the old land, in your old ways.

You're a new creature in Christ and possess it, you're going to possess a land that is different to the land you came out of. And it goes on to say, the land of Egypt was a land you came out of where you sowed your seed and you watered with your foot as a garden of herbs.

So that means that the land of Egypt was totally inertly land, it was a flat land and it was a place where it was all about what you did, that you were working with your feet.

In other words, when you were trying to water your crops, it's not about the garden and the crops, when you were trying to water your crops, what you were doing in the land of Egypt was you were working your way to get a little channel in the ground to get the water to flow along.

It was all about what you did, it was all about a system of do this, do not touch, as the Bible says in Colossians, do not do this and do that, it was all rules and regulations.

[ 25 : 35 ] That is not the land you've come to. But the land, it says in verse 11, and I'm going to this to finish off, this is verse 11, the land which you go to possess is a land of hills and valleys that drinks water from the rain of heaven.

So it's the blessings that come down from God, not the work of your hands. And verse 12 says this, the land in which the Lord God, this land that you go to, is the land where the Lord your God care it for.

God cares for you. You might have difficulty, but God cares for you in your difficult situation. He cares for you and the eyes of the Lord are always upon that land.

That's what verse 12 says. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Your whole life as a Christian, God has you in view. you can trust God.

But I want to finish up with verse 11 where it says, the land you're going to possess is a land of hills and valleys that drink in the water of heaven. You know, the problem with us is that I think when we go into the land, we're still in Egypt on that flat land.

[ 27 : 02 ] And we're trying to hem our way through our problems by working with our feet and our hands to channel out the water when there is a rain from heaven. Now, the example is here that if you go into a land of hills and valleys, it's a beautiful land, but one thing that won't work in the land of hills and valleys is try to work out a channel because the hills and valleys won't work with that.

It's the rain of heaven that does that. You need just dirt and earth and flat ground and boring ground to work out a channel. You can't work out a channel on a hill.

So you rely on God. You rely on what God has since down from heaven. You have the promise of God of a sure victory.

You have God's word as a sure guide and you have God's presence and we need nothing else.  
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