

Don't Forget to Remember

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 January 2021

Preacher: Keith Knowlton

[0 : 00] Now we will hear the reading of Joshua chapters 3 and 4 from my wife Rachel. Our reading is from Joshua chapters 3 and 4.

Early in the morning, Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. After three days, the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people.

When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.

But keep a distance of about 2,000 cubits between you and the Ark. Do not go near it. Joshua told the people, Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you. Joshua said to the priests, Take up the Ark of the Covenant and pass on ahead of the people. So they took it up and went ahead of them. And the Lord said to Joshua, Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, So that they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.

[1 : 24] Tell the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant, When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, Go and stand in the river. Joshua said to the Israelites, Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God.

This is how you will know that the living God is among you, And that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites. See, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. Now then, Choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, One from each tribe.

And as soon as the priests who carry the Ark of the Lord, The Lord of all the earth, Set foot in the Jordan, Its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.

So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, The priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is in flood all during harvest.

[2 : 31] Yet as soon as the priests who carried the Ark reached the Jordan, And their feet touched the water's edge, The waters from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, At a town called Adam, In the vicinity of Zarethon, While the water flowing down to the sea of the Ereba, That is the Dead Sea, Was completely cut off.

So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord Stopped in the middle of the Jordan, And stood on dry ground, While all Israel passed by, Until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, The Lord said to Joshua, Choose twelve men from among the people, One from each tribe, And tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, From right where the priests are standing, And carry them over with you, And put them down at the place where you stay tonight.

So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, One from each tribe, And said to them, Go over before the Ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, According to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, To serve as a sign among you. In the future, When your children ask you, What do these stones mean?

[4 : 03] Tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, The waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.

So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, According to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, As the Lord had told Joshua.

And they carried them over with them to their camp, Where they put them down. Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan, At the spot where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant had stood.

And they are there to this day. Now the priests who carried the Ark Remained standing in the middle of the Jordan Until everything the Lord had commanded Joshua Was done by the people, Just as Moses had directed Joshua.

The people hurried over, And as soon as all of them had crossed, The Ark of the Lord and the priests came to the other side While the people watched. The men of Reuben, Gad, And the half-tribe of Manasseh Crossed over, Ready for battle, In front of the Israelites, As Moses had directed them.

[5 : 21] About forty thousand, Armed for battle, Crossed over before the Lord To the plains of Jericho for war. That day the Lord exalted Joshua In the sight of all Israel, And they stood in awe of him All the days of his life, Just as they had stood in awe of Moses.

Then the Lord said to Joshua, Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant law To come up out of the Jordan. So Joshua commanded the priests, Come up out of the Jordan.

And the priests came up out of the river, Carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground Than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place And ran in flood as before.

On the tenth day of the first month, The people went up from the Jordan And camped at Gilgal On the eastern border of Jericho. And Joshua set up at Gilgal The twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

He said to the Israelites, In the future, When your descendants ask their parents, What do these stones mean? Tell them, Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

[6 : 33] For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan Before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan What he had done to the Red Sea When he dried it up before us Until we had crossed over.

He did this So that all the peoples of the earth Might know That the hand of the Lord is powerful And so that you So that you might always fear the Lord your God.

This is the word of the Lord. Do any of you have something That has special meaning to you Because of a story behind it?

It might remind you of a certain time Or person or place. Maybe it's a souvenir. Maybe it's a gift someone's given you in the past. Perhaps it's a family heirloom That's been passed down to you From generation to generation.

I have one of those things I actually brought it To Scotland with me from the States It's actually just a brick And though it's not particularly attractive It has significant meaning to me Because it actually comes from My home church In Greenville, South Carolina And if you were to come to my house And see this brick Sitting on a shelf And ask me what it's about I would tell you The story behind this brick I'd tell you the story of my home church My church in the States Was downtown Presbyterian Church It was founded in 2005 When several local families Felt the Lord's calling To love and serve downtown By planting a church there For the first several years That it met The church didn't have a building And we were eventually able To purchase an old auto body shop Which served as our church building For a number of years But we eventually outgrew

[8 : 26] The size of that building And rather than trying to renovate We realized it was going to be Cheaper and easier Just to demolish the building And build a new one And so these bricks Were collected after the demolition And were given to church members Primarily to remind us Of God's faithfulness How he uses flawed people Who didn't know what they were doing To plant a new church And to symbolize How God had blessed the church By growing us in numbers By allowing us to be a light In the city By allowing us to even Plant other churches And so when I look at this brick As it sits on my shelf at home I am reminded of God's goodness And his faithfulness to me And to my church family In Greenville And so as we look at our passage tonight And we see the people As they crossed into the promised land Through the Jordan River We see emphasized God's faithfulness

And his desire for his people To remember his faithfulness And we see that God gives them a memorial After they complete their crossing So those are the two things I actually want to focus on tonight Is the miracle And the memorial The miracle of God performing That God performed by parting The Jordan River For the Israelites To walk on dry ground And that memorial That God

instructed them To build from rocks Gathered from the dry riverbed So let's first look at that miracle Now we heard from the last couple weeks From James as he preached That the book of Joshua Joshua starts with God's commissioning Of Joshua Moses who had led the Israelites Out of Egypt And through the wilderness For 40 years Has died And now it's Joshua Who would lead them Into the promised land The land of Canaan And so as we read in chapter 1 Joshua gave a notice Throughout the camp That they would be crossing the river In three days Joshua had sent spies to Jericho They had made contact with Rahab And they had returned With a good report That the Lord Had truly given them Or was going to give them The land All the lands of Canaan Into their hands And so now it was go time After 40 years Of wandering in the wilderness God's promise Was about to be fulfilled So you can imagine Their excitement And their anticipation Maybe you've experienced These same emotions In thinking about our family We actually went on a trip To Disney World last year And it was a gift That was given to the kids At Christmas time Although we didn't actually go Until mid-February And so we had two months Of this building excitement And anticipation It was every day The kids would ask You know How many more days Till we leave When can we pack our bags And that day finally arrived And we boarded our plane And flew to Orlando And we drove under that archway When you get on Disney property That says welcome To Walt Disney World And the kids were ecstatic So you think How much more Were the Israelites How much more Would they have been excited About this prospect They weren't merely going On a holiday They were moving Into the land of milk and honey That had been promised to them They were no longer Going to be living as nobads They would live in a house In a city They would have farmland Where they could raise Their families The time had finally arrived And so we see How Joshua commands them To get ready But it's not With instructions That you might think of As we would think of When we prepare To go on a trip He didn't tell them To pack their tents Or fashion any sort of raft To cross the river He told the people To consecrate themselves And this was actually The same instruction That God gave The people of Israel At Mount Sinai Before Moses received The Ten Commandments It would have actually Involved the people Washing their clothes Abstaining from sexual relations It was intended To help prepare them Spiritually God wanted them To be focused And clear minded He wanted to remove All distraction So that they could Fully appreciate The amazing things The Lord Was about to accomplish And so we Similarly we do This ourselves When we prepare For worship Each morning And each evening During our worship Time together We did it today Where we read A passage Perhaps it's A responsive reading And it's intended To prepare us To experience The goodness And the greatness Of God It's intended To help us Put aside Any distraction That we can Settle our hearts And focus our minds In order that We can be sincere In our worship And we have The same struggle

[13 : 31] When we think Of serving the Lord Too right How often do we say We are doing The Lord's work But we end up Relying on our own Planning and our Own execution We may give God lip service Or pray occasionally But our focus May remain on Ourselves and Our own ability We may have The best of intentions But how often Do we really pause To acknowledge Our need for God That it is God Who must work In us And through us To accomplish His purpose And so that's the reason Why God paused And had them Consecrate themselves Prior to telling him Of his plan And so we see After they Consecrate themselves God reveals How he is going To bring them Into the promised land He has devised A plan Where there will be No mistaking By the people Of Israel Or the people Of the land of Canaan The power And the presence Of God And so we read That in chapter 3

Verses 9 through 13 I'm going to read Them again for us Joshua said To the Israelites Come here And listen to the word Of the Lord your God This is how you will know That the living God Is among you And that he will Certainly drive Out before you The Canaanites Hittites Hivites Perizzites Girgashites Amorites And Jebusites See the ark Of the covenant Of the Lord Of all the earth Will go on Into the Jordan Ahead of you Now then Choose twelve men From the tribes Of Israel One from each tribe And as soon As the priests Who carry the ark Of the Lord The Lord Of all the earth Set foot in the Jordan Its waters flowing Downstream Will be cut off And stand up In a heap We see that God Just like God Parted the Red Sea For the people As they were escaping The Egyptians Who were pursuing them God was going to do The same thing here He was going to Part the waters Of the Jordan For his people To enter The land of Canaan And so what's even More impressive about Though This is what is noted In verse 15 That the Jordan Jordan River Was overflowing At

that time Because it was The time Of harvest And so this crossing Would have actually Occurred in the springtime Possibly March or April And due to The spring showers The melting snow From the north This would have Turned the Jordan Into this raging river Typically the Jordan River was probably About a hundred feet Wide in most places But in this case During flood season It could have been As much as A mile wide And the water Spilling out Across the plain Of Jordan There's certainly No one who Would have expected A person Much less A whole nation Of people To cross the river At this location And at this time Of year So God is making Abundantly clear That it is He Who is asserting His power

Over creation But it's not only God's power That's emphasized In this passage It's actually His presence The main focus Of this narrative If you look closely Is actually The Ark of the Covenant As we know The Ark Was created To be a symbol Of God's presence Among his people And we see Repeatedly That each time That God Or Joshua Gives instruction To the people It involves The Ark of the Covenant It's the Ark That's carried By the priests That pass on Ahead of the people It's the Ark That's carried To the river's edge Causing the waters To stand up In a heap It's the Ark That remains On dry ground In the middle Of the river As the people Pass through And it's the Ark That's carried Out of the river On the opposite side Of the Jordan Causing the waters To return To their flood stage As before God is clearly Showing that He is with His people And that He Is solely Responsible For this miracle And so

It's worth asking Why did God Choose to act In this way What was the purpose Of this miracle I mean God certainly Could have had His people Travel further north Where it would have Been easier To cross The Jordan River He could have Just simply Waited a couple Months Until the flood Season had ended I mean They've been traveling Around the wilderness And wandering For 40 years What difference Would a couple Months make At that point Right But God Chose to do The impossible By stopping A raging river For an entire Nation to cross On Jai ground And we see The reason That God Gives for this At the very End of chapter 4 In chapter 4 Verse 24 It says this He did this He did this Speaking of God That all the People of the Earth might know That the hand Of the Lord Is powerful And so that you Might always Fear the Lord Your God God wants His greatness

[18 : 34] To be known By all And he craves The loyalty Of his people As this passage Says And so what Better way Of doing that Than by exposing The helpless Condition of those Who saves God's power And his presence Is always most evident When we are At our weakest And maybe you've Experienced that Yourself Just like the Israelites Where God Has put us Put you Into an Impossible Feeling situation Where the Circumstance Around you Make you feel Like the outcome Is so bleak That you are Without hope You know Maybe a family Member Has passed away Maybe you've Experienced a Cancer diagnosis Or you have A rebellious Child Perhaps a Horrible boss In a dead End job Or some Sort of Financial Hardship Maybe it's The isolation And loneliness That you're Experiencing During this Lockdown That doesn't Ever seem To have An end In these Hard times It's important That we

Recognize That God May bring About these Difficult Situations For the Intended Purpose Of revealing Our limitations To reveal To us That our Deliverance Only comes Through the Power And the Presence Of the Lord And when We recognize This it's Important God notes That it's Not just His people That recognize This but It's something That is to Be recognized By all The people Of the World The revelation Of God's Might and Glory is Missional In nature It draws The attention Of the Unbelieving World When the Unbelieving World sees God work In us And through Us Despite Our Impossible Situations Around us It compels Them It compels Those who Have rebelled Against God To turn And embrace Him And to be Saved And further God says In this Reasoning Here That when We acknowledge His power And his Presence We will be Compelled To fear

Him This means That we Want to Give him Our whole Hearted Loyalty When we See his Goodness And greatness We desire To be Drawn Closer To him Because we Recognize That it's He alone Who's Worthy Of our Praise And our Worship And so That's why God Performed This miracle In this Way This is Why God Continues To intervene In our Lives Today That he May reveal His power And that He may Attract The loyalty Of his People And so If that's Why God Performed The miracle Then let's Consider this Memorial That he Creates Instructs The Israelites To assemble After this Miracle Is performed Hope You know We've My family Has been In Edinburgh For over Four months Now And though There hasn't Been a lot We can do With everything Closed down One of the Things we've Really enjoyed Doing is Is going On walks Where we Have been Able to See a

Number of Monuments And memorials

It's truly One of the Things that Makes Edinburgh So distinct And especially For myself And my Family That's Americans We come From a Country that Doesn't have This long Of a history To come Here and See such a Rich history Is such a Neat thing For us Where we See these Monuments Or memorials That are Constructed For poets Or theologians Or politicians For war heroes Whatever it may Be They really All serve The same Purpose To preserve And to Promote The memory Of a person Or an event And so that's What God Instructs Joshua To do here After the People of Israel had Passed through The river Onto dry Ground Joshua Instructs The leaders From each Tribe To take A rock From the Riverbed To form This Memorial And so we See it If we look In Joshua 4 Verses 5 Through 7 It says This Go over Before the

Ark of The ark Before the Ark of the Lord Into the Jordan To serve To serve As a sign Among you In the future When your Children ask you What do these Stones mean Tell them that The flow of the Jordan was cut Off before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord When it crossed The Jordan The waters of the Jordan were cut Off These stones Are to be a Memorial To the People of Israel Forever So we see That even Though God Had just Revealed His power To his People By this Miracle He Recognizes Our Tendency To forget In fact Back in Deuteronomy He warned The Israelites While they were Still in the Wilderness Not to Forget In Deuteronomy 6 10-12 He says This When the Lord your God Brings you Into the Land He swore To your Fathers

[23 : 36] To Abraham And Isaac And Jacob To give You A land With large Flourishing Cities You did Not build Houses Filled With all Kinds Of goods That you Did not Provide Wells You did Not dig And vineyards And olive Grows You did Not plant Then When you Eat And are Satisfied Be careful That you Do not Forget the Lord Who brought You out Of Egypt Out of The land Of slavery In fact God goes Even further Than giving This warning Because a Few chapters Later Chapter 34 Of the Book of Deuteronomy God actually Predicts That his People When they Experience this Wealth and This comfort In this Promised land They will Rebel And they Will break His covenant And so I Imagine when the Israelites heard This news When they Were told That they Would rebel In the future That they Might find it Unimaginable Right?

Even if they Admit they Kind of grumbled A lot in The wilderness Because they Just didn't Have any Shelter Any permanent Place to Live They were Eating the Same food Every day They would Have thought Hey you Get us to The promised Land and We are going To be so Thankful There's no Way we are Going to Forget your Goodness and Your faithfulness But God Obviously knew Them and he Knows us Better than We know Ourselves And he Knows that One of the Greatest Enemies to Our faith Is our Forgetfulness Some have Described it As spiritual Amnesia We see This cycle Repeated by The nation Of Israel We see it Repeated in Our own Lives That God Provides For us He proves His faithfulness To us And we In turn Show our Gratitude And our Praise But as Time passes We lose Focus We face And when we Come to face

New challenges Or difficulties Then we Grow to Worry again And we Grow anxious And we Completely Forget about How God Has cared For us And has Provided for Us in the Past So God Gives his People This sign To remember His faithfulness And the Importance of The sign Is twofold Not only Does it Point Backward At the Miracle That God Performed It also Is intended To point Forward You know You may Know people Who love To reminisce About old Memories They always Talk about The good Old days Right But the Criticism That they Often receive Is that They are Living in The past But by Instructing His people To build This memorial Of stone God Is not Wanting his People Simply To live In the Past These stones Are meant To signify A much Greater Reality They reveal God's Character As a Covenant Keeping God He is Telling them That I As I Was faithful To you In the Past I am Faithful To you Now And I Will be Faithful To you In the Future And that's The good News that We see Throughout The scriptures Right That God Always Remains Faithful To his People And so Just as That memorial Served as A sign To the People Of Israel God Has given Us signs As well That we Use today One of Those signs Is the Lord's Supper When we Take communion Together And although We haven't Been able To participate In this Sign for a While due To COVID It's important For us to Remember the Sacrifice Of Jesus That when We break Bread And drink From the Cup We are Remembering How the Body of Jesus Was broken How his Blood Was shed On the Cross So that We can Be rescued From the Punishment Of our Sins And be Presented Pure and Holy Before God The Father By sending His son Jesus God Was actually Fulfilling a

Covenant That he Made to Abraham Long ago Abraham As you know Was considered The father Of the nation Of Israel And a Part of That same Covenant Is what God Fulfilled Through Joshua Here God Had also Promised To give Abraham's Descendants The land Of Canaan And so It's worth Noting This parallelism That we See between God's Parting The Jordan And God's Providing Jesus And we See this Specifically In the Person Of Joshua As I Mentioned It's Joshua Who is Now The leader Of the Israelites Who is Leading them Into the Promised Land And we See what God Says to Joshua Specifically In chapter Three Verse Seven He says This Today I will Begin To Exalt You In the Eyes Of All Israel So That They May Know That I Am With You As I Was With Moses Joshua Had Proved Himself

[28 : 34] To be A Faithful Servant And God Said That Through His Presence He Was Going To Make Him A Great Leader Now I Think It's Interesting To Note The Name Joshua Means God Saves And If you Remember From our Advent Series Last Month It's The Same Name That Was Given To The Child Born Of The Virgin Mary Jesus Yeshua God Saves And So In The Same Way That God Exalted Joshua He Also Exalts His Son Jesus We Read This In Philippians 2 9 11 Therefore God Exalted Him To The Highest Place And Gave Him The Name That Is Above Every Name That At The Name Of Jesus Every Knee Should Bow In Heaven And On Earth And Under The Earth And Every Tongue Acknowledged That Jesus Christ Is Lord To The Glory Of God The Father Yoon

This People Man Goes Everyone Where ■ Hindus their river by themselves. And we see Jesus who comes to save us in our helpless, hopeless condition and bring us into relationship with God. And we see instead of building a memorial of stones, Jesus is called the one who performed signs and miracles. He himself is our sign. In fact, the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the living stone. In 1 Peter 2, 4-8, it says this, As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in the scriptures it says,

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Jesus is our living stone, and as our living stone, he is the foundation of our faith. He is the embodiment of God's faithfulness to us. And the neat thing about this passage, not only is he is he the living stone, but it says that those who trust in him are also like living stones. We, the church, are his temple. We are considered the Lord's holy priesthood. And so just like the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant across the Jordan, we ourselves carry the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

And so if you are discouraged and if you are in need of reminding of God's faithfulness, we can look to Christ as our sign. We can look to Christ as our rock and our salvation. We can remember that once we were rebels against God, but now have been made children of God. We can be encouraged by the Holy Spirit who lives within us. There is a YouTube video that I really love. It may be one that you've seen before. It's a number of years old. It's a recording of an old lady who's lying in bed, and she has Alzheimer's. And her adult daughter is lying next to her in bed. And the daughter says to her mother, I love you, mama. And the mother says, I love you too. The daughter asks, but mama, you don't know who I am, do you? And this old lady who had, because of her Alzheimer's disease, had previously forgotten who her daughter was. During this video, she has that light bulb moment.

[32 : 40] And she responds, yes, you're Kelly. And the daughter is just visibly shocked. And she says, yes, mama. And the mother continues, and I named you Kelly. And I love you, Kelly.

The daughter smiles and replies, I love you too, mama. And the clip ends with the mother saying, she says, oh, isn't it wonderful? Isn't it wonderful for us? Isn't it wonderful when we remember the faithfulness of God?

Isn't it wonderful to remember how he loves us and how he has saved us and how he continues to care for us? But the reality is, just like that old lady who likely forgot her daughter again, we don't always remember. Just like the people of Israel, even with signs and memorials, we too are prone to forget the faithfulness of God. But we can take comfort in this because our salvation is not based on our memory. Our salvation comes through the power of a covenant keeping God who never forgets. Our salvation is achieved by his son who promised to never leave us or forsake us. Psalms 105.8 says this, that God remembers his covenant forever.

The word he commanded for a thousand generations. And so if you are in Christ, you can take comfort in the security of your salvation. And you can have faith. You can rejoice in the faith that is given to us through Christ.

If you are not a believer, I pray that you will recognize the power and the presence of God, that you will recognize the hopelessness of your condition, that you cannot save yourself. But it's Jesus who comes to us, who offers us life, who offers to carry us into relationship with God through faith.

[34 : 47] And so as we close, I want to actually leave you with some lyrics from a song that our family really loves. It's actually a kid's album put out by a musical artist, Ellie Holcomb. And it's just a whole album that overflows with wonderful gospel truths. I'd recommend it to anyone who has kids and even those who don't. And the song is entitled, Don't Forget to Remember. And though the lyrics are simple, its message is powerful. And the chorus goes like this, Don't forget to remember you're never alone, no matter if you are up high or down low. And as sure as the sun will keep rising above, don't forget to remember that you are dearly loved.

The song ends like this, Let the whole earth remind you of what God has said, from the moment you wake up till you go to bed. Oh, and even on days you forget what is true. Don't forget to remember that God won't forget you.

You pray with me.