

Last Sunday we looked at Joshua 1. This week the Cadet Theme comes from Joshua 3:5 so we'll read that chapter together. I invite the cadet readers to come up. Let me pray and then we'll read this passage together—from your Bibles, your phone app or the screen. Please follow along.

Joshua 3 ¹ Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. ² After three days the officers went throughout the camp, ³ 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. ⁴ Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits [[nearly 1 km](#)] between you and the ark; do not go near it.”

⁵ Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

⁶ 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.

⁷ And the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. ⁸ 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.’”

⁹ Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. ¹² Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. ¹³ 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.”

¹⁴ So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. ¹⁵ Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge, ¹⁶ the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ 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.

Cadets, I say the word *amazing* and what comes to mind? Shout out some answers.

Now, what do you think is amazing when it comes to God?

A hymn title???--Amazing Grace
That should always amaze us!

Creation—that was an amazing rainbow!
You have to remember that it is God's creation so we praise him for the amazing things we see and enjoy.

Maybe a new baby in your family... they sometimes cry a lot but still a new life is pretty amazing when you think of how complex and beautiful each person as a creation of God.

In our Bible reading, you may have heard this verse. Well, I know it was read but did you really hear it? 😊 Joshua 3:5 says that Joshua told the people, *"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."*

Before we go farther, let's stop and remember what's going on here. The people of Israel lived in Egypt for 400 years as slaves. Slavery is no joke. February is black history month. We remember that many African people were made slaves for many years. They were mistreated, beaten and killed. Treated like property you could buy and sell. Used by white people to help these masters become richer. And that has left physical scars on those immediately effected by the mistreatment by their slave-masters but it has long-term effects on their families for generations.

So, God uses Moses to bring Israel out of slavery after 400 years. You have to think that Israel must have had some traumatic effects on their nation after all those years. And it shows fairly quickly. Moses leads them to the edge of the Promised Land—right where they are in this story—but then they doubt God's ability. They get scared because those people you read about in v.10—the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites—seem too big and strong. Israel had seen God's provision in the 10 plagues that he brought on Egypt and getting them out of there, but they became faithless when they saw new opposition. They even thought about going back to slavery in Egypt. So God put the brakes on the Promised Land and he left Israel in the desert for 40 year where they had to learn to trust him.

I remember going to that desert area in 2015. It was hot as blazes. Over 40 degrees Celsius. Our leader took us into the desert for about an hour. We had hats and some people had umbrellas. We had water. He walked us to one area, talked a little. Then he'd say, "Come, follow me." He'd walk a couple hundred meters to another spot and stop. We're still cooking in the heat. He'd talk some more. Then again, he says, "Come, follow me!" This happened several times. And some of the people in our group were getting a little upset because it was so hot. It seemed

some of those lessons he was teaching us could be given just as well in an airconditioned room some other time.

At the last stop, our leader said, “What I’ve just done with you is a small sample of what God did with Israel in the desert over the course of 40 years. There was a pillar of fire or cloud that the people had to follow. When it stopped moving, they had to set up camp and stay there until it moved again. It could be days or weeks or months. But when it moved, it was like God saying, ‘Come, follow me.’” Israel had to learn to trust God. He was promising them something good, a place described as a land of milk and honey, a land of prosperity and freedom. But before going there, they had to learn that the blessings of God come first and foremost by listening to him and trusting him.

The first time God led them to the edge of the Promised Land, they doubted, feared and were faithless. Now it’s time for the second try. Moses has died. Joshua is now the leader and it’s time for round 2. Joshua tells the people, tomorrow is the day we start moving into our new land. Let’s trust the Lord. Let’s do what he says. Some of the things God says might sound crazy but let’s do it. He’s going to amaze us.

And, again, if you were listening... what was the amazing thing that happened, Cadets?

It was like saying, “Okay, all you Cadets and counselors, line up at the back of the sanctuary! Then march toward the front here. And we’ll just pretend this is carpet here is water. Head Counselor Mike will lead the way and when he gets to the edge of the water—which will be deep, well over your heads—just keep walking. And the second Mike’s toes touch the water, the water will stop flowing and you’ll be able to come up here to pulpit without getting wet.

Or imagine crossing over the North Saskatchewan River from Beverly to Capilano but without a bridge. Instead, the water just stops flowing, the river bed dries right up before your eyes and you can all march across with dry feet. I think you’d all say that’s pretty amazing. No, that’s totally amazing!

That’s what really happened for Joshua and Israel. It’s a true story. It would have been amazing to be there and witness it firsthand. Better than any imaginary Superman story or a James Bond movie.

Now, Cadets, there are many things that are important to learn from this story. But I want to draw your attention to just two.

Consecrate Yourself

First, as Joshua calls the people to move forward, he says, “Consecrate yourselves.” (v.5) What does that mean, boys? Consecrate. Consecrate yourself. What is consecration?

Consecration is giving yourself to the Lord. There's a song we sometimes sing called, "Take My Life and Let It Be." Who knows the next line? "Take my life and let it be... consecrated all to thee." It continues, "Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise." It's talks about giving ourselves fully to Jesus so that he can use us for whatever is best. We want to live ever, only, all for him.

Or think of your theme song: Living For Jesus... a life that is true,

striving to please him in all that I do. That's consecration.

Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free. That's consecration.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee. That's consecration.

I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne. That's consecration.

My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone. That's full consecration.

In New Testament language reflecting on Old Testament imagery, Paul in Romans 12:1 describes consecration as becoming "a living sacrifice." He says, *"I urge you in view of God's mercies to present your bodies to God as a living sacrifice...."*

Old Testament sacrifices were placed on the altar as a gift to God. You took what was yours and said, "Now it belongs to God, for his use, his plans, his glory." He's given me everything but I give this back to him in thanksgiving or to show sorrow for my sin or to show my sincere desire for something that honors him.

Today, if I'm a living sacrifice, I'm putting myself completely in God's hands. I'm saying that God's agenda in life is more important than mine. I offer my life to you, Lord. Take me to fulfill your purposes in this world. I trust you more than I trust myself. In a strange play on the slavery imagery, consecration is saying, "Lord Jesus, there's no master better than you. No one will treat me better. I won't even treat myself better than you'll treat me. So, I offer my life to you. I'll gladly become your slave."

Does that make sense? Consecration is the best response we can make to God's love and grace to us. His saving us through Jesus.

Before we consecrate ourselves to Jesus, our life is for the pursuit of our own goals and satisfaction. We rush around pursuing our desires. We can consecrate ourselves to things other than Jesus. We can be consecrated—fully devoted—to sports. We do everything possible to achieve our goals without any thought to honouring Jesus in the process. We can be consecrated to money. We do everything in our power to make money, regardless of what ethical lines we have to cross to get the loot into our pockets. We could even be consecrated to money and do everything above board, nothing illegal and nothing unethical. But

making money for ourselves is our focus. Same could be true for our spouse or our family or our friendships or job or sports. They can be good things and we should be dedicated to doing our best, but we need to do this within the lines of keeping our heart fully consecrated to Jesus.

That means we slow down and aim to listen to the Lord for guidance. We build time into our life to read his Word, to understand what he is saying to us so we know what he wants. We long to obey him, to do his will. We no longer belong to ourselves, the world, or anything else. We're here to serve Jesus and seek things in this life that honour him. That's consecration.

Following Jesus

Hand in hand with consecrating ourselves to God is following Jesus. And this is the second thing we can find in our Bible reading today.

Consecration to God requires following Jesus. That's what God told Joshua to tell the Israelites. You see, Cadets, the priests had to lead the way through the water because the priests were the people who stood between God and the people. They carried the Ark of the Covenant which represented God's presence among Israel. So the priests were the intercessors between God and his people. The priests made the offerings on behalf the people who entered the temple or the tabernacle. People couldn't come to the altar without the priest. Offerings were not made without the priests. People couldn't really even get close to God. There's one line in our reading that says the people had to stay 2000 cubits away from the Ark which the priests were carrying. That's almost 1 kilometer.

Our priest is Jesus, boys! Jesus is our prophet, priest and king. But here in Joshua, we see our need of the one and only Highpriest, our Lord Jesus. He's the one who removes the need for us to bring sacrifices to the temple. He's the one who is the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins. He stands between us and God. That's the job of the priest. He makes sure that we are holy and pure in God's sight. In fact, you might say that Jesus closes the gap between us and God.

Because he's the perfect sacrifice for sin, who gave himself for us, we follow him. He's leading us forward into the life of peace, joy, love and grace. He's not only our Saviour but our Lord. A Lord is someone we listen to and obey. We listen to him because he always has our best interests in mind.

Do you believe that? If so, we need to be praying and trusting Jesus to help us, to provide for us just as he did for Israel as they entered the Promised Land.

We pray to him because he's at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. He will bring our needs to God as our interceder, which is another word for a priest.

He wants to help us enjoy the best life possible, which is life lived his way. That's what you Cadets confess in your Cadet verse—John 14:15:

If you love me, you'll obey my commandments.

That's another way of saying, if you love me, you'll consecrate your life to me , you'll follow my voice and my leading. Then you'll enjoy the blessings of that life—an amazing life—just as Israel was offered an amazing life in the Promised Land.

The summary of Jesus' invitation to keep his commandments is to love God above all and your neighbour as yourself.

Think about how to love your neighbour. Our neighbour, according to Jesus, is everyone, especially anyone in need. I read a story about a guy named Mitchell. He lived beside an elderly couple. Mitchell was a black, 15 year old young man. And the couple were white, old and frail. They were very different people and very different stages of life and with very different lives.

However, Mitchell took an interest in the elderly couple. He noticed that they were growing older and more frail and that their children lived far away. Mitchell was right next door. So, he made a point of checking in on his neighbours every single day and spending a little time with them. Mitchell drove with Trent, the elderly man, to get the groceries, helped him carry them to the car and into the house. When the lady, Cianne, was sick and hospitalized, Mitchell went to visit her and gave her hugs and encouragement.

Now, I don't know about you, but I think that's amazing! A young man stepping out of his comfort zone to show love to his elderly neighbours! That's what Jesus does for us. He helps us take our eyes off ourselves and get them on to others. He changes our focus in life because he changes our heart. That's amazing. He helps us see what other people might need and how we can possibly help them. And, remember this, boys: Mitchell didn't have to spend one cent to love his neighbours. He just showed up and did small things to love his neighbours.

Quiet obviously, he was blessed by his visits too. I'm pretty sure he would say that his neighbours are amazing people and they would say the same about him.

My point is that it doesn't have to be hard to live a consecrated life of following Jesus by loving your neighbour. It's something every one of you Cadets can do. It's something we call can do in some way.

Boys, God is with you every day. Jesus ensures that. God sees you and watches over you. Isn't that's amazing too! He has plans for you, Cadets, and will do amazing things not only among you, but through you. Keep that in mind now and all the days of your life. Commit yourself to Jesus, follow him, and watch how he does amazing things in your life. God is in the business of doing amazing things, even in and through you and me.