

## **Remember to Remember**

Trinity CRC, May 14, 2023 AM  
Teen Challenge Service

**Joshua 4:1-9, 20-24**  
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Early in the year, we started looking at the book of Joshua. Then we took a break over Lent and I'm going to come back to Joshua now for the next few months. Last time we looked at Joshua 3 on Cadet Sunday. Today's message will be a very short one due to time constraints this morning. We'll look at Joshua 4 today and again next week. Today's message is entitled, *Remember to Remember*. As you listen to the reading, see if you can figure out why I chose that title.

**Joshua 4** <sup>1</sup> When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup> "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, <sup>3</sup> 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."

<sup>4</sup> So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' <sup>7</sup> 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."

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.

In the next verses we are told how the crossing takes place. Then we pick up our reading in v.20

<sup>20</sup> And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. <sup>21</sup> He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' <sup>22</sup> tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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 might always fear the Lord your God."

**This is the Word of the Lord.**

Dear family of God,

How do you remember special and important events in your life? We all have our ways. My Google Calendar is my friend. It automatically tells me every morning what special occasions I need to remember that day. It includes family birthdays, significant anniversaries for people in the family and in the church and many other things including, of course, meetings and appointments for that day. Some of you might have one of those bathroom calendars that you peruse when you make your morning visit there 😊. That's never really appealed to me but if it works for you, great!

Interestingly, God told Joshua to use a pile of rocks as a reminder of an important event that happened in our reading. Israel entered the Promised Land, crossing over the Jordan River—at flood stage no less. But the Lord dried up the water before their very eyes. He allowed the whole nation to cross with dry feet. It wasn't only that they got into the land without having soaked feet or being drenched from head to toe. Most importantly, they needed to see—and remember—that the Lord did this for them. The Lord brought them miraculously into their new homeland. They are receiving this land as a gift from him. And they'll need to remember that repeatedly as the years unfold.

So, God tells Joshua to take 12 stones from the riverbed and make them into a monument to serve as a reminder to all the people of what happened here. In this way, he says, your children will see the stones from time to time and they'll ask you, "What's that pile of rocks for, Mom and Dad?" And that's your opportunity—and your responsibility—to tell them about the Lord's saving work.

This chapter, among other things, calls us to give testimony to one another of what the Lord has done. We sometimes forget that. Sometimes we maybe think it's proud to say too much. But we don't have to be quiet when it comes to telling the next generation what God has done for us! I am certain that the testimonies of our Teen Challenge friends this morning have stirred the hearts of all of us in some way. These men have had their lives changed by Jesus. The power of the gospel is setting them up to live free from bondage to addictions. Now that's their story to tell. It's their monument that reminds them what God has done and gives them the opportunity to say to us and anyone else, "The Lord has delivered me. The Lord has brought me into a new life. His grace through Jesus has saved me and is changing me day by day."

Mothers and fathers, children, sisters and brothers in Christ, our lives bear witness to what Jesus has done and is doing! We trust the one who takes our sins, our struggles and our pains upon himself. We trust him who set up his life for us, gave up his life for us. Set himself up on a cross and now says "take and drink and remember me..." Remember the price paid on the cross, the freedom I've earned for you! I've delivered you from bondage; brought you into a new life. We all have this testimony if we believe in Jesus!

Listening to one another's testimony is a way for us to remember to remember. We need reminders—verbal, written and even sacramental ones. Why? Because if we learn anything from the Old Testament, it's that people are forgetful. When life is good, we forget the Lord's mercy and grace to us. We take it for granted. We fail to live like people redeemed and changed by Jesus. We tend to bow to other gods—gods of our own making—instead of keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus.

Every once in a while, I listen to different radio stations while I'm driving. The other day I had a country station on. Yes, you know what's coming. Some guy got his heart broken. The lyrics are sung to the girl who dumped him as he seeks to drown his sorrows. Parker McCollum sings,

*Since you poured our love down the sink  
I think I'll just stay here and drink  
I tell myself that I should quit but I don't listen to drunks.*

When I heard that, I laughed and then thought, wow, that's so honest! That's how much we need Jesus. We can't quit anything in our own strength. We can't even tell ourselves to quit something that's hurting us. That's why Jesus is inviting us to remember him. He's calling us to depend on him, to look to him for victory over all the things that drag us down and keep us in bondage. He is the victor. He rose from the dead to give us life. That's also what I heard today in the testimonies from Teen Challenge. Let us always look to Jesus, dear people, and remember that he's the one in whom we find true life—life that's filled with his power and grace and moves us more in the direction of fullness or wholeness; what the Bible calls shalom. This is what Jesus wants us to know, to remember and to enjoy.

And all God's people say, Amen.