

A Memorial to Remember

Joshua 4

Good morning...

Since tomorrow is Memorial Day, I would like to take a moment to pay honor to all of our nation's heroes who died serving in the armed forces.

The LORD's protection is why we have certain freedoms, but we can also be thankful for the sacrifices of those who died while serving in the armed forces.

Remembering what the LORD has done for us is very important for believers!

Every day of our Christian Walk should be a Christian Memorial Day, so today we are going to talk about the importance of a memorial to the LORD.

With that thought in mind, please open your Bibles to ***Joshua 4***

In Washington, D.C., there are different memorials to remind us of the people who helped **form** our nation.

There is the Washington Monument, as well as the Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt memorials.

There are also WWII and Vietnam War memorials, the memorial to the flag-raisers of Iwo Jima, and many others.

Why are there so many different memorials to so many different things in our nation's capital?

Because we are forgetful people, and we can sometimes forget events of the past. Sometimes the LORD's people need help remembering the works He has done for us as well.

Throughout the Bible, the people of Israel were told not to forget all the LORD had done for them.

Allow me to set a backdrop to the ***Book of Joshua***, which we will look at this morning.

Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and then, because of their lack of faith, they wandered the desert for forty years until that unbelieving generation died off.

When Moses died, the LORD called Joshua to lead Israel, as the LORD led Israel to claim their inheritance.

Joshua is the book of new beginnings for Israel, telling of when it was finally time for Israel to enjoy the blessings of the land the LORD had prepared for them.

In the ***Book of Joshua***, their new leader was taking the children of Israel over the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

The LORD wants us to enjoy the life He has given us today.

Jesus Christ, our Joshua, wants to lead us in conquest today and share with us all of the treasures of His wonderful inheritance.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, NKJV

I. Be reminded of courage.

Read ***Joshua 4:1-7***

The Hebrew word for "***memorial***" means "**To remember**". Memorials have played an important role in biblical history.

Memorials can be made up of a pile of stones, altars, or even the Ark of the Covenant. There were memorials for special days, celebrations, or rituals to recall something the LORD had done.

Here, the LORD commanded His people to build a memorial so they and their children would remember that the LORD brought the people into the Promised Land over the dry Jordan Riverbed.

Joshua 4:1, "when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan," then the LORD gave more specific instructions.

The LORD does not always reveal His entire plan to His Children, He wants us to obey Him without knowing all of the details, which is genuine faith.

Once we have obeyed the first step from the LORD, then He will give us the next step in His plan.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. NKJV

The idea is that the LORD only shows us one step at a time. i.e., He gives us the light for the next step in front of us, and then He wants us to trust Him for the rest of the journey.

Back in *Joshua 3:14*, “*So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people,*

Joshua 3:15 and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest)” NKJV

(Notice) Joshua didn't send out Engineers or advisers first; he sent the priests out, who carried the Ark of the Covenant, which was the visible representation of the LORD's presence.

Even with the LORD's specific promises and guidance, entering the Jordan was still an impressive **step** of **faith** for them to take.

Because of the spring rains, at this time of early harvest, the Jordan River was swollen and overflowing its banks.

During most of the year, the Jordan River was about 100 feet wide, but during the spring, the river overflowed its banks and became about one **mile** wide.

The priests began the procession with the Ark of the Covenant 1,000 yards in front of the people, as the priests walked into a river.

As soon as the priest's feet entered the water, the river stopped flowing, which created a wall of water twenty miles upstream.

Unless we step out in faith and get our feet wet, we will not make much **progress** for the LORD in our Christian journey.

As John Ortberg says, *“If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat.”*

Here we are told that twelve men were to pick up a large stone from the middle of the Jordan River and carry it to the side of the river where Israel would camp in the Land of Canaan.

This memorial was for them to remember what the LORD had done. First, the rocks were to be a reminder of their personal experience...

Then notice, in *verse 6*, this ***memorial*** will cause the children to ask, *“What do these stones mean to you?”*

These stones were to remind those who were present of their personal experience, what they saw, heard, and felt. Then the people were to share their experience.

In other words, *“Tell your story while keeping a clear memory of what the LORD did for **you**.”*

LeeAnn Womack said, *“I hope you never lose your sense of wonder”*.

We should keep telling our stories, so we never lose our sense of awe and wonder, at what the LORD has done in our lives.

You see, having relationships in church, with family, or within some other group **is okay**...but

The LORD wants us to know Him **personally**, so we should set up memorials to remember the things that have happened between Him and us.

If you do not have experiences between just you and the LORD, *how can you claim to have a personal relationship with Him?*

Every Christian has memorials; maybe not one made out of a pile of stones, but all believers have memories of a time God moved. Consider what kind of memorials we have in our lives.

Most followers have significant things that have happened in our past and when we think of those things, we remember how the LORD worked during those times where it was clearly Him!

One of my memories is when the LORD drew me back from a prodigal lifestyle to Himself. I can picture that moment I surrendered to Him like it happened yesterday morning.

I originally gave my life to the LORD when I was 15 years old from a very abusive, dysfunctional lifestyle.

After two years of a dramatic lifestyle change, my father died, I got angry with the LORD, and turned my back on Him, but He didn't forget me.

I was living in a backslidden state and had become a Prodigal son as I tried to go back to my old life for 5 1/2 years.

During that period of utter rebellion in my life, the LORD was working behind the scenes, drawing me back to Himself.

One day, my world came crashing in, and at that moment in time, all of my self-sufficiency failed, and I was left hopeless.

I remember being hopeless to the point that I prayed a prayer that would redirect the rest of my life.

My prayer was, “*LORD, I don’t want to live like this any longer; please either take my life or take my life.*”

Fast forward until today; anytime I start to doubt the LORD’s working in my life, I can go back to the memory of that day in my garage and know the LORD is faithful.

That is what a memorial is intended to do!

There are memories of people the LORD has used in our lives.

For me, I remember many of the people who encouraged me when I was wrestling with a decision or call the LORD had put in my life.

There are memories and experiences, of the LORD’s answers to prayer, and of His marvelous hand of provision.

I remember in Bible College how the LORD always provided for our needs as we learned some valuable lessons about faith.

Most lessons in faith are not something you can be taught; it is something we must experience for ourselves to truly understand.

The days in Bible College with the LORD's constant provision for our family are memorials in my memory of His faithfulness and love.

No doubt, when you look around your home, you find similar memorials.

Each of those objects triggers memories of what happened then, of the things that the LORD did, and of things you experienced.

Some experiences have changed your life; others are memorials to warm memories you always want to remember.

II. Twelve stones to remind you to share your faith.

Re-read *Joshua 4:6-7*

The LORD knows how we think and that we are forgetful, which is why He instructed Joshua to build a memorial.

So, each time the Israelites saw it, they would be reminded they had not crossed the Jordan in their own ability or strength.

When we remember the times, the LORD gave us **courage** to believe Him for impossible things, it bolsters our faith to trust Him for impossible things again.

In two places in this chapter, parents are reminded of their responsibility for the communication of God's Word to their children.

Here in *verses 6-7*, the LORD told Joshua to tell the people,
“That this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’”

Skip down to *verse 21*

Read *Joshua 4:21-24*

As with other *memorials* in the Old Testament, the intention of this memorial was to provoke **questions**, especially from future generations.

1 Peter 3:15 Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. NKJV

We need to remember that faith in Christ is personal, and we need to teach the Gospel to future generations.

Just think about our own country; we have drifted away from our Christian foundation in just the last couple of generations.

We need to tell each generation about the eternal life the LORD offers to anyone who believes and the great things He has done for us and the rest of His people.

Many of the memorials in the Old Testament served a specific purpose.

The LORD warned Israel not to let the environment of the pagan society that surrounded them dictate their values.

This pile of stones was a memorial was a reminder that God the Father, is the caregiver, and the performer of miracles.

He had provided for His people the way to enter the land He had promised to them.

It has always been the LORD's plan that the whole world should "**know**" that the God of Israel is the only true and Living God.

Not only was the crossing of the Jordan River a stirring event for Israel, but it was also a terrifying event for all the people living in the land of Canaan.

It was not only a time for remembering an act that the LORD had performed, but also...

III. The memorial represented a personal commitment.

Read *Joshua 4:8-9*

The crossing over was a time of renewal of personal **obedience**.

The Children of Israel obeyed the Word of God; they picked up the stones and carried them to the place where they camped on the bank of the Jordan River.

While the men were carrying their stones back to the shore, Joshua picked up another twelve stones and built a ***memorial*** in the very center of the riverbed, as a personal act of worship.

For Joshua, building this ***memorial*** was a private act and was also representative of a **pivotal point** in his walk with the LORD, making a commitment to serve God continually.

Once the twelve stones were set on the shore, and after Joshua had built his altar in the middle of the river, Joshua commanded the priests to finish crossing the Jordan River with the Ark.

And then, the moment that the feet of the priests touched the other side, the wall of water that had piled up 20 miles back up the river came crashing back into place.

IV. The memorial was a time of a new beginning.

Read *Joshua 4:19-20*

It is significant this happened on the tenth day of the first month, exactly forty years to the day after Israel came out of Egypt.

The Children of Israel had completed their journey back from slavery to a new beginning and they were finally settling in the Promised Land the LORD had given them.

Leaving the edge of the river, the Israelites went to a place called Gilgal to make their camp.

Gilgal was on the eastern border of Jericho, and the name means “*the reproach has been rolled away.*”

Forty years of spiritual defeat and failure have been rolled away—the past is behind them. The LORD was faithful to His promise, and this was the dawn of a great new beginning.

The days of refusing to respond to the LORD under Moses were gone, complaining had ended, and the hopeless wandering in the wilderness was behind them.

Remember what the LORD has done, and once we truly repent of our sin, we forget the past and focus on serving the LORD.

Philippians 3:13 one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

Philippians 3:14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. NKJV

The LORD allows us fresh starts as He rolls away our reproach!

The Christian Walk in scripture is often referred to as a **race**.

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

1 Corinthians 9:25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. NKJV

What happens if a runner constantly looks behind them?

- The runner may trip and fall **constantly**
- The runner's eyes are off the prize. And most importantly,
- The runner will probably **lose** the **race**.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NKJV

We have a crowd of believers in heaven, who have gone to glory before us as witnesses, and they are cheering us on.

When Paul was about to die, ***2 Timothy 4:7, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.***

The Children of Israel were now a people with a powerful new sense of purpose, determined to take new territory with God.

We should be able to look back and see those monumental occasions that stand out as times when the LORD changed our direction and gave us new hope and a new sense of purpose.

We are not to remember the past great works of the LORD so we can live in a dreamland of the past, thinking that the best days of our Christian experience are behind us. **Instead...**

We remember the great works of the LORD as a point of faith, so we can **trust** Him for greater and greater works presently and in the future, because we have experienced His past faithfulness.

Then you shall let your children know

There was an important purpose for their children as well, so they would have a point of contact with the LORD's miracles.

They could also tell their children that there was a second heap of stones under the water where the priests stood on dry ground.

The people could not see the memorial under the water. The memorial in the Jordan River reminds us that our **old life** is buried, and we live our new life by faith in obedience to Christ.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. NKJV

Their children had to accept the hidden memorial by faith, because they could not see it. If their children believed, it would make a great difference in the way they related to the LORD.

There was also a **purpose** for the *memorial* to the world so they would know there is a God in heaven who can work miracles, they should seek Him with all their heart and be saved!

John 20:26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

John 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." NKJV

Every time we start to forget what the LORD has done, or what He has called us to do, may we turn that into a Christian Memorial Day.

The memorials we make to remind us of what the LORD has done in the past will give us courage and faith to trust Him again.

The LORD will use memorials in our lives to give us hope for our present situations as well as hope for the future.

Maybe we, too, can remember a monument, a pile of stones, a memorial to a time when we, by an act of bold faith...

...decided to abandon ourselves to the LORD and step out into the unknown to take new territory for Him—to step into the waters of the flooding river in faith that God will take us across.

Our memorials during our walk with Christ remind us that the LORD allows us fresh starts as He rolls away our reproach!