

Joshua 3:1,7a, 11-4:7

1. We are called as followers of Jesus to bear witness in word and deed to the good news of God in Christ. What are some of the reasons why this is such a difficult calling in this day and age?

Read Joshua 3:1, 7a, 11-4:7

2. The Israelite people are about to enter into the promised land. It is a land that was sandwiched between the great powers of antiquity, Egypt to the South west and Mesopotamia to the North East. Any trade between them would have to travel the major trade routes through the promised land. It was in the best location possible to influence the nations of the world. God's primary command to them was to be holy as he was holy, to be set apart as he is set apart. Reflecting on what you know of how they were commanded to live by God's law what would the nations of the world encounter when they travelled through the promised land?
3. The Israelites had a barrier standing between them and their calling to be witnesses to God's love, grace, and justice at the crossroads of civilization. The barrier was the river Jordan. As Tim mentioned in the sermon many of us view the scene by picturing the Israelites walking toward the river, the river parting, and them walking over. We envision it this way because this is what we hope for, for God to do his part before we do ours. Why do you think this is the case?
4. The details of the text reveal a very different picture. The river is at flood stage. The priests are commanded to step into the rushing water. The river is dammed up some 20miles north so it takes hours for the river to dry up so that they can cross. What does this tell us about the nature of obedience, the nature of faith that is being asked of us?

5. It was so vital that they remembered this moment in their history that God commanded a representative from each tribe to be the last to cross. They were to pick up a rock from the middle and carry it to where they camped for the night. It was meant to be there so that when every subsequent generation walked by and asked what happened here, the story could be told of God's power and faithfulness, and how he worked through their obedience to bring them into the promised land. Why is remembrance of these moments so key to our life and mission as followers of Jesus? What moments of our faith are we constantly remembering? Why is it important that we remember them?

6. **Read 1 Peter 2:1-5; 9-12** Peter calls followers of Jesus living stones. Such that when people walk by our lives they will ask what happened here – and the story can be told. Is there a moment in your life that others have asked about that had something to do with your life of faith? If so – share the story.

7. **Read Matthew 3:13-17** 1400 years after Israel crossed the Jordan, in the exact same place Jesus was baptized by John. What do you think it means that these two events happened in the same place? What does it tell us about what God is doing in Jesus, and what we are called to as followers of Jesus?