

Joshua Session 5

Joshua 3:9-17 - "It's a Step of Faith"

Introduction:

The Story so far....God has led his people out of slavery in Egypt, through a turbulent journey of miracles, provision, doubt, rebellion, faith and lack of it!

- Crossing the Red Sea
- Manna / Quail / Pillars of fire / Pillar of cloud
- Mount Sinai - receiving directions from God about Holy Living - and then rebellion
- 40 years wandering in the wilderness - because the people failed to grasp the promises of God.
- A whole generation missed out on stepping into God's promises because of their lack of faith

So now we are at the edge of the promised land.... All that is stopping God's people stepping in is the river Jordan. Before they make this last step God's people are asked to 'Consecrate yourselves' (Joshua 3:5)

NOTE: When something is consecrated it is offered up and set apart for the purposes of God. They were to do this for themselves, they were responsible for their own response! Others could not do this for them - each one had to choose to set themselves apart.

The Bible Reading: Joshua 3:9-17

Some reflections:

- V8 The people were given clear instructions - the priests were to go in front with the Ark of the Covenant (which was a symbol of the presence of God) and lead the way.
- Instructions part 2 - the Priests were instructed that when they reach the river they were told to take a few steps into the water and..... wait!
- V14 After hearing the instructions - they actually do it! They leave the camp!
- V15 the Jordan was overflowing its banks. The challenge of crossing the Jordan is an intimidating prospect - this was not a simple task. In v2 - we hear that they'd camped by the river for three days - for 3 days they have heard the rushing of the River Jordan in full flood! What is going through their minds?
- V15 &16 The Priests enter the river - their feet touched the water. God moved - the water started backing up at the town of Adam. However, this was some 18 miles away upstream - how long were they standing in the water before they began to notice God had moved?
- There is that moment where God had told them to "wait" while the floodwaters pass.... They are in a place of absolute TRUST waiting to see how God would get them through this. What were they thinking?
- V16 - the riverbank became dry. Only THEN do all the people go past, and step up into the Promised Land.
- V17 - The leaders then had to linger in the place of God's miracle - they waited until all people had gone past, they themselves stepped into the land of promise.

What about us?

We have been in a season where God has been leading us as his church - shaping us for mission - being a church that can respond to a changing culture and serve the community of Hazlemere for years to come.

There are 4 principles in this passage that really speaks to where we are at now:

1. Leaders go first - they listen to God and lead the way. (From Clive to Mark, with the Core Team and PCC)

2. The Need to step out (God's people needed to leave the camp!). Following God often involves leaving the place of familiarity, the place of the status quo, the place of what is known. We can only reach the land of God's promise by moving forward - and this might feel like a real riks!

3. The Need to step through a place of transition - The people passed through the river of Jordan it was a place of uncertainty (how on earth could they cross a swollen river? Would the water ever stop?) - It required obedience and trust.

When we follow God there are always these transition places that can really really stretch our faith. It's not a walk in the park. For Jesus to fulfil God's call on his life he passed through Garden of Gethsemane (stretching faith) and then the cross (the ultimate sacrifice)

What do we do in that moment? (It's easy to get anxious - thats ok!)

God promises to lead us... but sometimes the miracle seems to be delayed. When you are standing in a place of uncertainty what do you lean on?

- **Know** God's promises - what is he asking? (They had been told that the promised land was their inheritance... we are convinced of God's leading for this season)
- **Stand Firm** in uncertainty - this is FAITH. God acted immediately when they stepped out in faith - but there was a delay in them actually seeing the move of God.
- **Wait** in the place of obedience for the fulfilment of God's promises

4. The need to step up. They needed to step up out of the Jordan and then into the land of God's promise.

This requires effort & it required ALL the people to follow the leaders as they follow God (1 Corinthians 11:1) - into the place that God has assigned, it may take time... but this is where God had called them.

Today:

This is our commitment as Church - that we believe that God has marked this journey out for us... Our leaders have gone first and we are all invited to **step out, step through, step up and step into our future together.**

We are in this together... being the people of God fulfilling the purposes of God.

Questions for LIFEgroups:

- *Have you ever been in a place where you've taken a risk and had to wait for the outcome - what did that feel like? what did you do? What was the result?*
- As you read through the passage - what challenges and encourages you?
- What parallels do you draw between Joshua's journey and our journey as a church?
- Which of those principles mentioned in the sermon notes above do you find most difficult (and why?) which stir faith? (and why?)
- How can we support and encourage one another during this season?
- Pray for our church, our future and our mission.