

Weekly Reflection – “Remembering is power to move forward.”

Faith Moves Forward

Joshua 1:1-2 - After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, [2] “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. So basically, God says this, “Moses is dead. You're in charge. Go cross over the Jordan River into the land that I've promised.” The point that I think God is making here is that Moses is dead, but God's promises are not. It's time to move forward, and Joshua is ready. Faith moves forward into the promises of God. Joshua and Caleb wanted to move forward when Moses had sent them and the other 10 spies into the promised Land. But the 10 spies did not want to move forward, fear got the best of them. (Numbers 13-14)

There's only one direction for the people of God to move, and that's forward. And of course, there's dangers and there's risks, but for Joshua, there's also the promise of God. Faith moves forward into God's promises. And Joshua knows that the promise from God is far more powerful than anything they could face.

So let me ask, what does forward look like for you today? What does forward look like in your life? Is it sharing the Gospel with someone? Is moving forward a disciple-making relationship with someone? Maybe it's forgiving someone who has really hurt you? What is it for you? Because the direction of faith is forward. What is forward for you?

It's also about the way forward.

For the people of God, it's not just enough to go forward, but the way forward is also just as important.

Joshua 1:8 - This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua is careful not just to go forward, but goes forward only as God leads. Faith joins God in what He is doing. Faith keeps in step with the Holy Spirit. Faith is obedient to do what the Word of God says to do.

And so Joshua brings the people of God forward toward the promised land, and they encounter a great obstacle, the Jordan River. And it's important to keep in mind, it's springtime, so the snow would melt off of Mount Hermon, and some scholars estimate that the river could become up to a hundred feet wide and twelve feet deep. (Joshua 4:18) And we're not talking about just like a couple of dozen people. Some scholars estimate that the nation of Israel was somewhere between two and three million people. So this is a humanly impossible task to get all the people across the Jordan, a very great obstacle.

What is controlling your faith, the obstacles or the promises of God? It's not about the obstacle before you, but a God who lives within you. Joshua says here's what we're going to do. The priests are going to take the Ark of the Covenant, and they're going to walk into the river. And the Lord's going to come through. The Lord's going to provide. That's the strategy. That's the approach. No plan B. What are you thinking in that moment, if you're hearing Joshua say this? You want us to do what? Sometimes going forward God's way will feel very risky to us.

So God calls the priests to put their feet in the river, and it rolls back 18 miles upstream, and the entire nation crosses on dry land. A miracle.

Joshua 4:1-7

What is a memorial? A reminder, remembrance...it's something tangible to remind. Why does God tell them to get some stones and make a memorial? God knows us and our tendency to forget. God knows

that they are going to face more obstacles, enemies, resistance; and they will need to remember. It's the same for us, if we are going to stay strong and courageous, share the gospel, make disciples, be obedient when it doesn't seem to make sense; one of the big things we need to do is remember. We need to stack some stones so we remember.

Memorials help us remember.

Memorials help us remember God's faithfulness and what He has done. God tells them to stack the 12 stones so that they will remember how He has delivered them (Joshua 4:23) And when the Bible talks about remembering, it's not just to remember the good old days. It's to remind us that the God who acted back then is the same God who acts right now. Remembering is not to transport us to the past, but to prepare us for the future. Jesus knows we're prone to forget. God understands our tendency towards spiritual amnesia.

Memorials help us remember not to give up and go back where we started. God knew that even though they had crossed over the river, the taking of the promised land was not going to be easy. And God knew that there was a likelihood that when they faced difficulties, some would be inclined to want to go back. We see this in the Exodus story. They're freed from slavery in Egypt. And then things didn't go quite the way they thought it would. ***"Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.""*** (Numbers 14:3-4 ESV)

Memorials can be a reminder for all of us in our faith journey of forward to not go back where we came from, to not go back to a life of sin, a life of bondage. These stones are declaring not only has God delivered us, but to not go back to where we came from. Maybe God is saying to some of us today who are tempted to go back, that's not your home anymore. You don't belong there anymore.

A memorial gives hope to the next generation.

There was coming a generation that would not have experienced the wilderness wandering or seen the crossing of the Jordan. How would they remember? How could they have hope in God when things get tough? Read Joshua 4:6-7 and Joshua 4:20-22. When the next generation saw the stones they would ask, "What do these stones mean to you?" Memorials are a way, an opportunity, to tell the next generation, new believers, struggling or hurting believers about the faithfulness of God, what He has done.

We need memorials in our life that cause the next generation to say, what is that all about? There's a sense that our lifestyle can be a memorial. When we live lives obedient to the Word of God it will cause others to ask, "What is the meaning of that lifestyle? Why do you live like that? Why do you prioritize Sunday so much? Why do I see you reading your Bible all the time? Why do I see you praying in the midst of difficulty? Why do I see you forgiving that person that really did wrong you? Why do I see you living generously, as if all of this is on loan to you in the first place? Where is that hope and joy coming from in the midst of such a painful situation?" What things will the next generation look at and say, tell me more about that?

We need memorials in our lives that proclaim to the next generation the faithfulness of God. The next generation is going to face difficulties. And you know what's going to give them hope? Your story of deliverance, your story of God's provision. There's going to come a generation that's going to need to know, is there actually light at the end of this tunnel? Is God who He says He is? Is there actually any hope here?

Psalms 145:3-4 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. [4] One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.