

YOU HAVE NOT PASSED THIS WAY BEFORE
June 4, 2017 Morning Service
Joshua 3:1-6

Often people in our church and in our culture will say to me, “You know, pastor, I’ve trusted Christ. I believe I’m a Christian but victory has escaped me.” It’s what II Kings talks about. When Jeroboam became the king the Bible says that Israel, while they kept the customs of God, they turned away from God. Beloved, you can keep the customs. You can come in this room. You can give your money. You can look the part but you can turn your heart away from God and wander in the wilderness. That’s where we are in Joshua. We were there last Sunday. We’re there again today in Joshua chapter 3.

There are two miracles. We saw them last week and you see them again today. The children of Israel came out of Egypt. God opened the Red Sea and they went across on dry ground. That is emblematic of our salvation. Then they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and that’s emblematic of where a lot of church folks get. They say, “I’ve been saved. I’ve trusted the Lord,” but they’ve never understood the fullness of the power of the Spirit of the Living God. They’ve wandered in the wilderness.

There was a second miracle. When they got ready to go into the Promised Land – we’re going to read about it Joshua 3 – in their preparation to come down to the Jordan. It’s flood season. The snow is melting on Mount Hermon. The water is running down into the Jordan. The Jordan is swelled. It’s overflowing its banks and God says, “Go across the Jordan.” They said, “Lord, can’t we wait until a better time when there’s not so much water?” Most people I talk to say, “Well I want to get there but can I wait until another time? Is there not a more convenient time?”

Friend, when God says go across you better get up and get going. If God calls you across the Jordan, it doesn’t matter if it’s at flood stage or a trickle, you better go. That’s what God’s calling us to this morning, to get across the Jordan. I can tell you right now that I’m not going to get done with this message. I’m going to get as far as I can and I’m going to preach the rest of it tonight but I’m going to get to the first two things that God’s put in my heart and I’m going to probably tell you about the last two and flesh them out in the evening service.

In Joshua chapter 3 we find the preparation for crossing the Jordan. Again, they’ve come out of Egypt, the Exodus. We all know about that. If you’re over 40 you’ve seen Charlton Heston open the Red Sea with the Ten Commandments and his big rod. He stood up like a heap. Nobody ever makes a movie about the Jordan. There needs to be a Jordan crossing movie. Let me tell you, that’s what the church needs today. We need to get across the Jordan, into the fullness. Friend, the Jordan doesn’t open up to heaven. It opens up to the fullness of the Spirit of the Living God. It’s Canaan, the Promised Land.

Well they're getting ready to go across. You find it in Joshua chapter 3 beginning in verse 1. Listen to the preparation period.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. [So they came to stay before they crossed.] At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it [that is the ark] a distance of about 2,000 cubits [about a thousand yards, 900 to a thousand yards, 2000 cubits] by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go [and then the title of this message], for you have not passed this way before." [You've never been across this Jordan. I'm telling you, there are folks in this room today. You've come out of your sin. You've trusted Christ but you've never entered in because of lack of discipleship, lack of surrender. You've never walked into fullness. You've never been this way before.] Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.¹

The meat of this morning's message, of this morning's gathering is for some believer to get out of the tent of your own security and follow the ark of the covenant across the Jordan into the fullness of the Promised Land. He has brought us here. He, that is Christ, will keep and preserve us here. That Christ will take us on from here. He brought us here. He's keeping us. He's sustains us and I'm here to tell you, friend, He will take us on from here. He will take us into victory and in this text I find four great calls to action. Like I said to you, I'm not going to get to all of them. I've got more in me to tell you than I've got time allotted. There are four calls to action if you're going to cross into fullness, into victory.

There are men here that need to lay down pornography. I'm telling you, the victory is on the other side of the Jordan. There are people in here that just cannot lay down a bottle. I'm telling you, the victory is on the other side of the Jordan. There are people in here with bitterness and anger, fear. I'm telling you, the victory is on the other side of the Jordan but you've got to get out of the tent of your own security, see the ark, and go where God says go. You've never been that way before. You've seen it. You've looked it. You've thought about it but you've never taken action to go there. God's calling some people out in this room this morning to get up out of your tent of security and cross the Jordan.

First of all, He will call you to consecration. Look at it in verse number 5 what Joshua said to the people. Joshua said, "Consecrate yourselves. Do that now because tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." That word consecration means purify

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yourselves. It means to sanctify yourselves. In its Hebrew construct it means to make yourself useful to God. Now there are times when God consecrates us and then there are other times when God calls us to consecrate ourselves. Here he is saying to the people, "Consecrate yourself." It's like I John 3, verse 3 says: *And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as [Jesus] is pure.* If you've got this hope, then you purify it. You don't wait for God to purify you. You purify yourself. You consecrate yourself unto God. You have to deal with sin in your life both private and public.

There are people who sit in this room today who have sin in their private life that no one knows. Your spouse doesn't know. Your children don't know. Your pastor doesn't know. Your closest friends don't know the struggle of sin in your private heart and private life but God knows. That all-seeing eye knows. He's saying to every one of us, "Purify yourself." In the private confines of your heart, in that place that you call yours that nobody else enters into, God says, "Purify."

Then publicly. That's where everybody knows. If God were ever to change your life, oh my Lord, what a witness you would be because people would say, "Something's changed." God's calling us to consecration. You must pray the prayer of Psalm 139:23 and 24 where David said: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me [a hurtful way in me], And lead me in the everlasting way.* O God, search me and if there's anything in me that's hurtful to You, to the kingdom, to myself, O God, lead me in the everlasting way.

Friend, the only way for that to happen is for you to get dead to yourself. You've got to be crucified as Romans 6 tells us. You must reckon yourself dead. You must say, "I've come to the end of me and I die unto myself. I die to myself." When you say that, then you say, "Not my way but God's way." You say, "Not my will but God's will." God's calling some people out in this room today, people that are watching this broadcast. You're on live stream but they're dead at the end of the live stream. Then you'll be made alive to Christ. The only way for you to live is die to yourself. When you die to yourself, Christ can live in you and through you. Not my way; His way. Not my will; His will. Dead to myself. "Lord, I die. I am crucified with you."

Three wonderful men came and prayed for me this morning. They do every Sunday. Three wonderful deacons. One of our older saintly men and two younger deacons. One of those men laid his hands on me and said, "Lord Jesus, I pray the pastor would be dead to himself today. Lord, we don't need to hear what he thinks. We need to hear what You say. Lord, help him die so that You can live within him." I thought, some deacon's been listening. Amen. Somebody's been taking a note. You better be sure you're dead before you pray for somebody else to be. Dead to yourself. Dying to my way, dying to my desire and say, "O God, not what I want but what you want." That's exactly what Joshua said to those people in those tents. Consecrate yourselves. Get right, pure with God inside and out, public and private. Be right with God.

There's some people God's calling to this altar this morning. You hadn't been to this altar in 20 years. You say, "Pastor, I don't have to go public." No, but God's calling you public this morning. He's calling you to rise up out of yourself, walk here, get on your knees, and say, "O God, I die to myself." Now if truth be known, some of you are not going across the Jordan because you've never crossed the Red Sea. Some people don't live in victory because they're still living in lostness. Oh they're Baptists but they're lost. I still like what old Doc Rogers, Brother Adrian used to say when they interviewed him. They said, "You're one of those arrogant Baptists that believe you're the only ones going to heaven." He said, "Lord, no, I'm worse than that. I don't even believe all of us are going." Amen.

We're not the only ones. Why? We've got a former religion but we don't know the Master. We joined but we haven't been justified. We've been baptized but we've never been born again. God must do that internal work but for some of you, you're saved. Now you've settled into the tents of your own security and the wilderness and wandering year after year after year. God left them there until that whole generation died. He said, "Rise up. Rise up and cross the Jordan." There must be a consecration of your life. You bring it broken to the altar, consecrated unto God.

The second point of action is the word concentration. That you concentrate. Notice what he said to them in verse number 3. He commanded the people. "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it then you shall set out from your place and go after it." I have a replica of the ark of the covenant in my office. It's got those poles through it and those priests have got it and the mercy seat is there and the seraphim on either side. It's a chest that was in the holy of holies. It was an ark of covenant. Now don't miss either word. It's like the ark that carried the people through the storm. Well this ark contains four things. There is in there Aaron's rod that budded. There is in there a bowl of manna. There is in there the two tablets of the Ten Commandments and then that that is in there that normally we don't talk about is that Moses wrote the whole book of the law and what he had written on those scrolls were there. Not just the Ten Commandments but all of the law for Israel was there. It was the word of God that was in that ark. Joshua said, "When you see that ark, the ark of a covenant, not the ark of a feeling. You see, we're in covenant with God. God's come to us and we've entered into covenant. Covenant contract, covenant relationship.

They said, "When you see the ark of the covenant, when you see it going then you stay a thousand yards behind it." Why? He didn't want everybody up around it because he wanted everybody to see it. He was afraid you'd get up and get lost in the crowd around it where you couldn't see. "But let it be way out in front so everybody could see." There were two million people here and they're all looking and they're saying it's that way and they're concentrating. Let me tell you, what you've got to do, after you come to consecration, brokenness, and death of your life, now you begin to concentrate. What do you concentrate on? You concentrate on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's Jesus in the morning, Jesus at the noontime, Jesus when the sun's going down. In Colossians 2:9-10, one of the greatest texts in all the word, the Bible

says: *For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made [say that word] complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.*

Let me tell you, the sheriff is not in charge. Jesus is in charge. The FBI is not in charge. Jesus is in charge. You're not in charge. Jesus is in charge. ISIS is not in charge. Jesus is in charge. In Him we have been made complete. Everything is in Him. He is the ark of our covenant. Jesus is the covenant one. We are in covenant with Him.

Now watch this. In your physical growth, you have to grow into all that God put in you when you were born. I was standing out here. I'm usually greeting people at the doors. A lady came in this morning with a nine day old baby. Nine days. I looked at her. I said, "Did you adopt this child?" I mean she looked like she never had a child. She smiled. She said, "I'm so thrilled." I said, "You ought to be." I'm not sure if she's still on valium or what. What a beautiful little baby. I thought about my illustration in this message. Now the first thing that momma and a daddy does, as soon as they bring that baby and they lay that baby up on the chest, abdomen of that mother – oh she's filled with joy. It doesn't take long and you start counting. Have they got all their toes and their fingers? Have they got two eyes and one tongue and two ears? Are all the pieces there?

You see, when you were born you were just like that little baby. You got everything that's going to be necessary for you to function. Now months went by and it got time for you to walk. They didn't take you back to the hospital to get you some legs. You already had them. Amen? You couldn't feed yourself but one day it came time for you to eat and you didn't have to go get some arms and hands, go to the hospital and get them screwed on. You already had them. One day it came time for you to talk. They didn't have to take you back down to the hospital and say, "Well go to the tongue department and put that in." No, you had that all along.

You see, friend, when you are born physically, you received at birth and then must discover and learn to use what you were given then. In your spiritual life it's the very same. Spiritual growth is discovering what God gave me at salvation in Christ and learning to appropriate it. You don't have to run back down and get some other experience. You've got to be discipled and learn to appropriate love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, patience. I didn't even have to think about that one. I just had patience automatic. I'm the most patient man you've ever met in your life. No, I'm just like you. I had to learn to grow into that but I didn't have to run and get it from somebody. It was in me because in me dwells the fullness. Sharon, put that Colossians 2 passage back up there for just a moment. For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form and then in Him you've been made 50%? No. It's complete.

You see, friend, the Christian life is not some experience of discipleship class. The Christian life is a person. Jesus does not give you peace. He is peace. He does not give you righteousness. He is righteousness. He doesn't give you knowledge. He is the knowledge. He doesn't give you wisdom. Jesus is the wisdom and what you've

got to begin to do is concentrate on Jesus. You watch Him. Wherever He goes, you go and if He starts across the Jordan, you go across the Jordan. Wherever Jesus goes, you go. He's the ark of our covenant. Yes, sir.

It was Friday night. It was almost 10:00 and my wife walked in the room. She said, "I need to run up here to the drug store. I forgot to get something I need for tomorrow." Then she asked this question. "Do you want to go with me?" That was not a question. It was kind and couched in a question but if truth be known it was get your carcass up off the couch and let's go. I said, "Alright, let's go. I'll go." She said, "You don't even have to go in." I said, "No, no. If I'm going, I'm going in. I want to look around." So we walked in. I asked her, "Do they have a magazine rack in here?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "You know, the 2017 football edition is coming out here just any minute. It's just 90 something days." So I started looking and I found *National Geographic*. Guess who's on the cover of *National Geographic* this month? Jesus of Nazareth.

It was amazing. I walked up there. I mean it just stuck out. I thought, "What in the world?" I remember when He was on the cover of *Time Magazine* in the early 70's during the Jesus Movement. There were so many young people going after Jesus, they put Him on the cover of *Time*. He was on the cover of *National Geographic*. *National Geographic* is trying to find Jesus. That's what they said. They're looking in some odd places but they were trying to find Him.

Beloved, you will never cross the Jordan until Jesus is on the cover of your magazine. I don't mean He's on page three or page 42. He's got to be on the cover of your life. When He's your all in all, you're about to cross over. Now if He's just one of many, you're going to wander in the wilderness. He's called some of you to put Him on the cover of your life today. That means when you go to work tomorrow, you're going to speak His name. Yes, sir.

In the last three months England has been hit three times. Terror attack. Last night we all saw it. The London Bridge. One of our church members passed through London Bridge one hour and a half before that car ran through and they jumped out and started stabbing people. I got a text from them. They said, "We're okay, pastor." They had just passed by the London Bridge area.

We live in a godless society, a world gone mad under a minority report of a religion based on death and a month of celebration called Ramadan, when our Muslim friends believe that Muhammad received the first revelation of the Quran. Therefore, they do not eat in the daylight hours for 30 days. It's out of that that these attacks have been coming in recent years. The month is not over yet. The answer to the need in our world is Jesus being on the cover of every Christian's life. You dare not cower in fear but step out and live for your Savior. Somewhere in a church somewhere today sits a young man that God's going to touch him and say, "I want you to be a preacher of the gospel." God's going to raise him up and turn America back to Christ. He's going to come.

There's going to be some family, God's going to say, "I'm going to send you across the world with the gospel." They're going to plant a seed. The first thing those people have got to do is they've got to put Jesus on the cover of their life. They've got to concentrate on the ark of the covenant. They've got to look up and see Jesus. What was in that ark was the word of God. The manna, He feeds you. Aaron's rod that budded, that's the wonders that he talks about. The wonders, the miracles that God's going to do. Then the Ten Commandments which are the basics and then the law of God which covers us from Alpha to Omega of telling us what to do and later to come for us, of course the New Testament, and that we concentrate our life. We read the word of God and bow every time that we hear a command. We say, "Lord, I'll obey. I won't argue with it. I just obey what God says do."

There's got to be a moment in your life where you consecrate your life and then you come. I'm telling you, friend, when you come to concentration you're going to be called a radical. I'm always amazed at that line about the Muslim folks. They say, "Such and such was radicalized." Every time I hear that I say, "Dear God, I wish you would radicalize some Baptists." Islam says to kill the infidel. Jesus says, "Turn the other cheek."

Oh I would to God some people would get radicalized at Olive Baptist Church where people would look at them and say, "You better not be so radical. You know, you need to calm down just a little." Friend, we do not live in a culture that needs the church to calm down. It needs to be wise. It needs to be smart. It needs to speak truth in love. I know we have some people that fly off the handle and do some nutty things but I'm here to tell you, it's a whole lot easier to rein in wildfire than it is to raise the dead. The church needs a group of folks that begin to concentrate. It's Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. I'm just living for Jesus. I don't marry unless Jesus says. Amen. I don't speak unless Jesus says.

So they got the ark and they started across looking out there. They said, "There it goes." "Is it telling you...? Alright let's go," Joshua said and so they started following the ark. They say, "Man, look at that." What are they going to do when they get down there to that water? They're a thousand yards and the Levitical priests step into the Jordan and the wonder comes. The Bible says that the water stood up in a heap to the north and rolled down to the Dead Sea in the south and at Gilgal they stood there and Joshua said, "When you get it, stand still." Here they came.

Can you see it? Can you see little Asher, that little boy? He's just about ten. Asher's walking by and he's walking on the riverbed of the Jordan and it's dry as this carpet. He walks by the ark of the covenant and his daddy says, "Come on, Asher." He says, "Man, I ain't never seen nothing like this before in my life." That little boy was changed forever because he saw the wonders of God from obedience that God brought.

We're not going to figure our way out of the mess we're in. We're going to plan. We're not smart enough to get ourselves out. What we've got to have are people

consecrated and then concentrating on God and walking where God say go even if it's at flood stage so that we can see. What the church needs today are the wonders of God because we're in such a mess we can't get ourselves out of it. We must, we must follow. We used to sing an old song, Jon, when I was a kid growing up. It just came to my mind. Follow, follow, I would follow Jesus anywhere, everywhere, I will follow home. Follow, follow, I will follow Jesus. Anywhere, everywhere, I will follow on.

If I had time I'd give you point three because it's the word continuation. Amen. You've got to keep walking. You see, God called you. Then you take another step and you go about ten years and you take another step. Some of you guys are in here and you're in your 60's and you're retired and you think, "Well I'm done." Oh, Lord God, no. You're just now getting started. As a matter of fact, you're just now smart enough to figure out what God's doing. You've got to walk on. Continuation. Continuation. I'll preach about that tonight.

Then you've got to go to the fourth call to action which is confrontation. That's when you get into Jericho and you walk around and you get to Ai and then you deal with all the people and the battles you've got to fight but God's going to give you victory. Do you know what Sunday this is on the Christian calendar? We don't ever celebrate it in the Baptist church because we're scared of it. We love Christmas and we love Easter but today is Pentecost Sunday. It's Pentecost Sunday. You see, when Jesus was born the incarnation was God with us. When He died at Calvary it was God for us but when He came at Pentecost it is God in us. God in us. Full of the Holy Ghost. That's where we've got to get. We must get to the fullness, to the place that we consecrate ourselves and then we do, we just, we become people that the world makes fun of because we're so in love with Jesus. Has anybody made fun of you lately? Anybody called you preacher? That's not a bad word. They say, "Ahh, don't preach to me." Why not? God knows you need it. When people say that to me, I say, "When you start obeying I'll quit preaching."

Now I understand there's a fine line between being a radical for Christ and a genuine idiot. Now I don't know any other word to use. I know there's a nice word and I could dream up one but when God puts the spirit of the prophet in you and the spirit of power in you, it'll be kind but I'm telling you, it'll be laced with power.