



## Sermon, Sunday September 12, 2021 “The Israelites Cross the Jordan”

**SCRIPTURE Joshua 3:1-17** <sup>1</sup> Early in the morning Joshua rose and set out from Shittim with all the Israelites, and they came to the Jordan. They camped there before crossing over. <sup>2</sup> At the end of three days the officers went through the camp <sup>3</sup> and commanded the people, “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place. Follow it, <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, a distance of about two thousand cubits; do not come any nearer to it.” <sup>5</sup> Then Joshua said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” <sup>6</sup> To the priests Joshua said, “Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass on in front of the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went in front of the people. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses. <sup>8</sup> You are the one who shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’” <sup>9</sup> Joshua then said to the Israelites, “Draw near and hear the words of the LORD your God.” <sup>10</sup> Joshua said, “By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites: <sup>11</sup> the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to pass before you into the Jordan. <sup>12</sup> So now select twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. <sup>13</sup> When the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing from above shall be cut off; they shall stand in a single heap.” <sup>14</sup> When the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing the ark of the covenant were in front of the people. <sup>15</sup> Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. So when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the edge of the water, <sup>16</sup> the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing toward the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> While all Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

### Introduction: Why You Should Cross the Jordan River

I meditated on Christian faith while reading the words of Joshua today, and remembered my experience two years ago. As you know, I was appointed from the Iowa Annual Conference on July 1, 2019 with a three-point charge. But before moving from Ames to Ankeny, I took a short vacation with my family in June 2019. My wife asked me to travel to Niagara Falls and Toronto, Canada. In fact, it was burdensome to go to Toronto, Canada by car rather than by plane. The driving time from Ames to Toronto by car was about 13 hours, and including breaks, we had to spend more than 14 hours on the road. Moreover, I was worried because my daughter, who was 12 at the time, and my son, who was 9, had a hard time riding in car for long periods of time.

Still, thinking that I could give my kids a good view, I plucked up the courage and set out from Ames, Iowa for Niagara Falls, Canada. We set off at night so the children could fall asleep in the car.

To be honest, I knew it was going to be a bit of a difficult trip, but I started off with joy because I thought I could still give my kids a good experience. Driving at night was tough, but tolerable. However, a problem arose as we entered Hwy 94 through Chicago. Hwy 94 was a road up north along Lake Michigan through the outskirts of Chicago.

However, there was a lot of fog on the road that day. It was dark at night and there was a lot of fog, so it was very difficult to drive because I couldn't see anything ahead. At that time, several thoughts ran



through my mind. “Why did I leave at night? I made the wrong choice and put my family in a difficult situation! Even if it was expensive, we should have taken a plane instead of a car! Can we safely get to our destination, Canada!?”

However, there was no other way than to move forward, since leaving Ames and having already passed many roads, there was no way to go back. In fact, I stopped by a motel on the way, went to sleep, and thought about leaving again the next morning. But I continued the drive cautiously towards Canada. And, in my heart, I prayed earnestly to the Lord to keep us safe. Thankfully, the Lord kept my family safe and we were able to travel safely to Niagara Falls, Canada, and create great memories with my family.

As I recall the trip to Canada, which now remains a good memory, I pondered on the many obstacles we face in defending our faith. What we must choose in order to get to the promised land of Canaan and heaven; the many conflicts we experience when difficulties come, and the things we depend on in that situation, and furthermore, when we go through the narrow gate, I thought of the glory we were going to experience.

Just as we learn the wisdom of life through experience in life, we must not stop in our faith life, but rely on the Lord and move forward step by step toward the place the Lord has commanded us to go. A very old story a long time ago about the Israelites 3,000 years ago, before entering the land of Canaan, faced the same difficulties as we who are living today. In the end they grew their faith and achieved the growth of faith through this process.

The Israelites did not know what awaited them on their journey to Canaan. However, they moved forward by faith. The Lord guided the way of the people of Israel through the word of the Lord during their journey. And the Lord commanded the people of Israel to rely on the word of the Lord. Today's text tells the reason why the people of Israel, moving forward with hope and vision, had to cross the Jordan River. Only by crossing the Jordan River can we obtain the land of Canaan that the Lord has promised. Through the text, we can see how we can make progress in faith in our uncertain lives.

### **Body: Things to keep in order to cross the Jordan River and reach the land of Canaan.**

Let's look at today's text. In general, once we experience certain events and situations, we can do better the next time. The Israelites had the experience of crossing the Red Sea in the process of coming out of slavery in Egypt. And now, ahead of the entry into Canaan, the generation of the Israelites changed. All the parents' generation died in the wilderness, and those who are about to enter Canaan are their children's generation. In the past, the process by which parents' generations left Egypt was an escape from when they were slaves in Egypt.

However, the generation of children in today's text is facing the future. Both generations need faith. The parents' generation needed faith to break free from the ways of the past, and their children's generation needed faith to achieve a bright future. So, for Joshua, who inherited the mission to lead the second generation of Israel to the land of Canaan after Moses, the Lord gives the following words.

**“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”(Joshua 1:7-8)**

Here is the way to get to the promised lands. Joshua led the people of Israel with these words. Then, what must we keep in order to cross the Jordan River and reach the land of Canaan?

#### **1. There must be a confession that the Lord works and that only the Lord will satisfy us.**



Crossing the Jordan River was not done by the people's collective wisdom. Thoroughly planned by the Lord and led by the Lord. From Joshua chapter 1, the Lord also gave us future plans and dreams. **“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”(Joshua 1:9)** And the Lord will give us a way to make it happen.

**Also, today's verse 3:8 says, “Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: ‘When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.’”** This verse tells of how the Israelites go into the Jordan River without conflict. The Lord commands the Israelites to enter the Jordan River without delay. The Lord is demanding absolute obedience from the people of Israel. Of course, obeying the Lord's commands is not easy for us.

But we see the Lord at work through the words of the Bible. At the time of the Exodus, it seemed that the Israelites were being killed in front of the Red Sea by Egyptian soldiers, but that did not happen. The Lord's promise is enough to us. The Lord Himself provides a way to fulfill His promises to us. So, the confession of the Lord that we need is that 'the Lord works and the Lord alone is enough.' Then, what else must we keep in order to cross the Jordan River and reach the land of Canaan?

## **2. The way we get to the promised lands is through trusting and relying on the word of the Lord.**

Today, if someone were to ask the Exodus II generation, “What was your greatest benefit from your difficult wilderness life?” That is the Lord's word to the Israelites. The Lord made Israel a covenant to the people through the Ten Commandments. Therefore, God's people must always listen to the word of the Lord. **That is why Joshua says, in today's text 3:9, “Draw near and hear the words of the Lord your God.”**

Therefore, the first step in obedience for us is to listen to the word of the Lord. And we can come to obedience by hearing the word of the Lord. Without obedience to the word of the Lord, we cannot enter the promised land and accomplish the things the Lord has planned.

**The Lord said this through Moses in Exodus 14:13. Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.”** Also, **Joshua 3:10 says, “The living God is among you.”**

The Israelites witnessed the amazing work of the Lord parting the Red Sea. And through their journey through the wilderness, they became the covenant people. The Lord also promises to be with the Israelites who are about to cross the Jordan River and enter the land of Canaan. These words of the Lord give us great courage and comfort in our weak faith. Therefore, the beginning of life for the children of the Lord must always be to hear the word of the Lord first. We bless you that we can trust and rely on the word of the Lord more.

In today's text, the Lord's plan for the people of Israel is not just for them to cross the Jordan River. The Lord wants the people of Israel to know about the Lord, to realize that the Lord is guiding them, and to acknowledge that the Lord is the one the people of Israel can depend on, and He wants them to enter the land of Canaan and live as the Lord's covenant people. Therefore, we must be able to live by realizing and relying on the will of the Lord through the Word of the Lord. We hope that everyone will read and meditate on the Lord's precious Word, the Bible, every day.

## **Conclusion: Let's achieve the growth of faith!**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. We hope we all grow in faith. We hope our lives will be satisfied with the Lord alone. Also, we hope that we will have the faith to trust the word of the Lord more. So, we bless you to make progress in faith in your lives. The Holy Spirit will do all these things with us. Amen!

