

“Looking Back: Remembering the Jordan”

Joshua 3-4

Saeyoung Park

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The children at this time can be dismissed for children's worship. And if you have your Bibles with you please turn to Joshua 3, 4. For the scripture reading, we're going to look at Joshua 3: 1-13 and Joshua 4:1-7. Receive now God's word.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and they set out from Shittim and they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. At the end of three days, the officers went through the camp and commanded the people. As soon as 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 and follow it. Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about two thousand cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go. For ye have not passed this way before. Then Joshua said to the people, consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And Joshua said to the priest, take up the ark of the covenant, and pass on before the people. So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. The Lord said to Joshua, today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses. So I will be with you. And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, when you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan. And Joshua said to the people of Israel, come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said, here is how you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore, take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap. Joshua four, verse one. When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, take twelve men from the people from each tribe of man, and command them, saying, take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight. Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed a man from each tribe. And Joshua said to them, pass on before the ark of the Lord your God in the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come. What do those stones mean to you? Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

There was an Old Testament maxim that goes something like this. To remember is to obey. To forget is to fall into idolatry. We all face the problem of remembering. Or to put that differently, we all face the problem of forgetting. We live in a fast paced world. We rush past events, we miss the details. And so, as one theologian writes, the cluttered mind poses a unique danger to our lives. It makes us forget not just our keys and wallets, our appointments and deadlines, our birthdays and anniversaries, but it makes us forget even the most important things, including, yes, the gospel itself. This morning, as Pastor Alexander shared, we start a short two part series on looking back and looking forward. We'll be looking back at 2025 and next week pastor Rob Looper will be bringing to you a word from Hebrews 12 as a framework for looking ahead into 2026. But as I considered what text I might set before you, Joshua three to four came almost immediately to mind, because there's perhaps no passage in the entire Bible that more emphatically focuses on the act of remembering. This passage is often referred to as the crossing of the Jordan, but it would be more accurate to call it the remembering of the crossing of the Jordan.

Now, the event itself was fairly straightforward, and you are all familiar with it. Israel crossed over the Jordan as the ark stood in the midst of the river, and on the other side twelve stones were set up as a memorial to what God had done. Easy peasy, lemon squeezy. But I challenge you later this afternoon as you're enjoying your afternoon cup of tea or coffee to read through Joshua three and four in its entirety and see if you can make sense of the narrative sequence of events, and I'll wager that you will walk away as I did the first three tries. Stressed, depressed lemon zest. Because. Because the narrator does not recount this crossing in a chronologically linear fashion. Rather, he employs what we might call flashbacks, and he has us cross the Jordan not just once, but again and again and again, each time providing us with details that we didn't see before. And so that naturally raises the question, as the title of one article expresses, why do Joshua's readers keep crossing the river? Let me offer you this as an answer.

The flashbacks, the repetitions, the enigmatic structure all of it is to reinforce what this passage is about. Remembering. It struck me that this is often how we experience life. To say the same thing twice. We rush past events and before we know it, we look up. And it's the end of December. Another year gone by. So that from time to time, we need to discipline ourselves to deliberately go back and remember. And each time we look back, certain details we may have missed start to surface again in our memories. It's as though God is saying to his people, don't rush past the Jordan. Look back and then look back again and remember what I have done for you. Having said that, I think the most intuitive way to go through this text is by going through it geographically.

I'm going to be jumping around quite a bit in our passage, but this will be the progression. First, we'll take a look at Israel before the Jordan, then Israel between the Jordan and lastly, Israel beyond the Jordan. So you can think of those as our three points before, between and beyond the Jordan. Let's get started. Joshua chapter three, verse one again.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and they set out from Shittim, and they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

Dawn breaks on a new day, and Joshua rises early. He enjoys a few moments to himself before the rest of the camp begins to wake, and the sound of the hustle and bustle floods the air. I can't imagine that Joshua would have been able to sleep that night. He must have been restless with both anticipation and anxiety. The gravity of this moment may be lost on us, but I assure you it was not lost on him. And I wonder if, in the silence of that morning, if the last forty years of his life didn't flash before his eyes, and if it didn't feel to him as though all of it was but a mere rehearsal to set the stage for this very moment. See, forty years ago, the Lord had delivered Israel from Egypt through mighty works of wonders, through his mighty servant Moses, and of course, through the mighty waters of the Red Sea. And yet we ought not forget that the Exodus was only the beginning of Israel's salvation. The end goal was never getting out of Egypt. It was getting into the Promised Land. This was a blessing that Israel could have inherited almost immediately after the Exodus, but a blessing that they forfeited. You will remember the mission of the twelve Spies in Numbers 13 and you will remember their report. There are giants in the land. They said, we cannot take it. Yahweh cannot give it. And then Israel cried out, these faithless, rebellious words, would that we had died in the wilderness. It was only Caleb and Joshua who remembered the wonders of the Lord in Egypt and said, let us go, for we are able. Yahweh is able. But the more Joshua tried to persuade the people, the more they grew to hate him. As we read in Numbers 14:10, then all the congregation said to Stone, Joshua, no doubt a moment that still lingered in his memory. And for this rebellion God granted Israel the desires of their hearts and allowed them To die in the wilderness. For forty years have passed forty years of standing in the chasm of the already, but not yet. And Israel now stands where they once stood. They've come again to this crisis, point to this great moment of decision. All the blessings of God's promises, the consummation of Israel's salvation on the other side. And we wonder, along with Joshua, well, the forty years of wilderness wanderings. Well, the forty years of God's fatherly chastening will that have softened Israel's stone cold hearts. The crossing of the Red sea was indeed monumental in redemptive history. But you see, it remains incomplete. It's the crossing of the Jordan that will mark the transition from the promises of God given to the promises of God now fulfilled. We might even ask, what would have been the point of the Exodus if there would be no entrance? And now, with Joshua, you can perhaps better sense the gravity of this moment. And yet, it's precisely because of this that we can't help but think. It's somewhat strange that after forty years of waiting,

God brings his people to the very doorsteps of Canaan, only to have them wait just a little while longer to set up camp for three days. We're told before the Jordan. Before this final barrier that separates them from the land. And it's what God tells them to do in this waiting period that I'd like to focus on. Two instructions he gives. First, Israel is to consecrate themselves. Second, Israel is to follow the ark. Joshua chapter three, verse five. Take a look.

Then Joshua said to the people, consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

It's striking, isn't it, that between the spying out of Jericho and the marching around Jericho, the way in which the Lord prepares Israel to take the land is not by having them train for war, but it's by having them make themselves holy. That's what consecrate means to make holy. Sinclair Ferguson observes that what's implied here is that if Israel doesn't consecrate themselves, they cannot enter the land. Not because holiness is God's condition for them, but because holiness is the necessary means by which they are to receive God's blessings. You cannot dwell in God's presence in the land unless you are holy, because God is holy. It cannot be any other way. Now, what exactly did consecration entail? It's not spelled out in our text, but in other passages, such as Exodus nineteen, numbers eleven, we see that it entailed at least two things washing your clothes and abstaining from sex. And what did these rituals in turn signify? Well, there's a kind of negative and positive here. There's a turning away from sin and a turning towards God. You see, in washing your clothes, it's as though you were symbolically washing away the sin which clings so closely. In the words of Hebrews chapter twelve, and in the abstinence of sexual intimacy, you were demonstrating that there's nothing you are unwilling to let go of, whether temporarily or permanently, in order to follow after God. Not even those things that are good in and of themselves, such as intimacy with your own wife. It says.

Jesus will later say in Luke chapter fourteen verse twenty six, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. In other words, as a matter of practical necessity, he cannot follow after me. But isn't it the case that our hearts and attitudes are so often entirely opposed to this spirit of consecration? We claim, and we cling to our Christian liberty and say, I have rights, you know. And indeed you do. But I might respond with the Apostle Paul's rhetorical question in one Corinthians nine, do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife? You see, when you cling to your rights, Those rights in and of themselves, whatever they may be, may not be sinful, but your heart, your heart is very far from God. It's as though you're saying to him with clenched fists, this is mine, and you cannot touch it. The Paul says, for though I am free from all, I have made myself a slave to all. He says, I gladly forfeit my freedom and relinquish my rights for the sake of the gospel. This, in effect, is Joshua's message now to his people when he says to them, consecrate yourselves. Joshua is inviting Israel to open up their clenched fists, to let go of it all, so that with open hands they might receive the fullness of the blessings of the promises that is theirs in the land flowing with milk and honey. So first consecrate yourselves.

And second, God instructs Israel to follow the ark. Joshua chapter three, verse three. As soon as 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 and follow it. This is the first time that the Ark of the covenant is mentioned in the book of Joshua, and it will now become the primary focus of the entire text. In Joshua three and four, the ark is mentioned seventeen times, and the priests who carry the ark are mentioned fifteen times. This is actually the densest passage in all of Scripture on the Ark of the covenant. Putting those two together a combined thirty two instances in which the narrator has you look at the ark. Do not let it fall out of your sight. Of course, you all know what the ark is. It was a wooden box, gilded with gold, and placed inside

of it were three objects -- the tablets of stone, Aaron's staff, and a jar of manna. Covering the ark was a lid called the Mercy Seat, with two cherubim bowed and overshadowing the seat with their wings. It was called the Mercy seat because if you remember, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would take the blood of the bull, and he would sprinkle it with his finger seven times as an act of atoning for Israel's sins, the ark symbolized God's throne and rule. It symbolized the place that Israel was to look in order to find mercy. And it symbolized God's presence with Israel. As Exodus twenty five twenty two says, there I will meet you. Now in this particular instance, Israel was instructed to follow it, but as verse four says, to keep a distance from it of two thousand cubits, which is about a thousand yards. We may initially assume that the reason for this is because of the holiness of this sacred object, and yet the explicit reason that's given is this in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before. See, they were to keep this distance, so that they could keep the ark in their line of sight. But in verse six, now at last, after three days. Wait, the ark is on the move, which means God is on the move. And you can sense the eagerness and the excitement of the people. But just as they get to the river, the Lord pauses yet again to give that dreadful thing called exposition. Verse nine. Take a look. ***And Joshua said to the people of Israel, come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said, here is how you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites. Verse eleven. Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.***

It's almost maddening, isn't it? While the Israelites, and perhaps while we as the readers, want to rush on to the Jordan, the narrator does not let that happen, because before God does a miracle for them, Israel needs to be told the meaning of this miracle. I like how David Firth puts it. He writes, it's almost as if getting there too soon will distract the people.

His remark made me recall a time when I stayed with my older brother for a few months now. My brother, just to let you know, has five children and at the time the oldest one was seven. The youngest one was two. And so you do the math there. One of the things that I enjoyed doing, which also drove me completely crazy, was going to church with them. And on some Sundays I would even ride with them in the same car in their Toyota Sienna. My brother and his wife would sit up front, the three boys in the back, the two girls in the middle row and me squeezed between number one and number five in the middle of the middle. And every Sunday, this is how things would go. Some of you don't need to be told because you already know. When we arrived at church, before anyone got out of the car, my brother would turn around and we would proceed to have a one minute family meeting. Sound familiar? And he would ask the kids, okay, guys, can you tell me why we are here? And in unison they would say in the most enthusiastic voice possible. We're here to worship God. And then he would ask, so then what are we not going to do? And in unison again, we're not going to fuss. We're not going to run around and we're not going to be loud. And then and only then would he let them out of the car and into the church.

Now, let me ask you, let's see if you've understood this illustration. Why did my brother do that? If your answer is so that they wouldn't fuss, run around and be loud. You are only partially correct. You see, he did that not so that they wouldn't do certain things per se, but he did that

so that they would do something very important so that they would pay attention, so that they would look and listen so that they wouldn't miss the act of God, the wondrous works of the Lord in worship.

This is what Joshua is doing for Israel before they get to the Jordan and before they get into the land. He's saying, pay attention. Don't miss what God is about to do. His instructions assume that it is possible for Israel to cross the Jordan and to miss the point entirely. Verse ten again, this is how you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites. Do you see what God is saying? He is telling Israel the end from the beginning.

Here's the logic. If God can dry up the Jordan, then he can surely drive out the Canaanites. And here's the application. If Israel remembers the Jordan, they will fear the Lord. But if Israel forgets the Jordan, they will fear the giants of the land.

Many of you have spent some significant time this past year just sitting there before the Jordan, waiting for that challenge, that difficulty, that obstacle to be removed from before you. Some of you are there still, and I can't help but wonder if the reason for your waiting isn't so, that you might consecrate yourself so that you might learn to let go of all else, and to look to Christ. And if it isn't so that you might pay attention to the ark. To pay attention to the work of the Lord, not in the land, but to the work of the Lord in the midst of the Jordan, in the midst of that trial.

So first Israel before the Jordan, now second, Israel between the Jordan. We now get to the crossing itself in verse fourteen. Take a look at Joshua chapter three, verse fourteen. So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water. Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. I hope you can appreciate the way in which the narrator builds the tension. This is in Hebrew narrative, what we might call slow motion. As the priests approach the river, the narrator zooms in on the feet of the priests. And just as they're about to touch, the brink of the water, he says, will be right back after this commercial break.

And before we move any further, I'd like to pause and do what the narrator does. I'd like to do some hydrology, which is the study of rivers. I do think that we have a tendency to diminish this particular miracle because, well, it's not the first time that God's done something like this. In fact, the first time he did it, it was an even bigger body of water and therefore a better miracle. Right. That's how we think of the Jordan. Now, it's true that during most times of the year, the Jordan River is a very crossable river. In fact, earlier in this book, the two spies have already done it twice. But we're not talking about two ninjas anymore. We're talking about the whole camp, including the elderly, the children, the women. And notably, it's spring when the Jordan floods. It's that time of the year when the heaviest rains would have recently stopped, and the snow on top of Mount Hermon would have started to melt. So the runoff water from the peaks and valleys would have swollen up this river. At other times of the year, you can cross the Jordan at a depth of maybe three to four feet, but in springtime the waters would have reached a depth of ten to twelve feet and a width of up to a mile. As for the river itself, well, that was the

most dangerous part of all. You should not imagine a tranquil stream that Jordan was a violent, turbulent, angry, mighty, rushing river. One scholar, and he happens to also be a frequent tour guide of the Holy Land. But John Beck writes that travelers had to be ever careful of the risk of drowning in the zigzag current that compromised footing and pulled one into the center of the river. This is what now lies before Israel, and this is what the priests are about to dip their toes into. You almost can't help but chuckle at the image of these priests getting right up to the brink of the river and seeing and hearing the torrents loudly rushing past their feet and thinking to themselves, so how exactly is this supposed to work? And yet, and yet we're told that they took that great step of faith. They took that step that Israel was so unwilling to take forty years ago. Like the Apostle Peter, the Lord called and they stepped into the waters. It's meant to make us exclaim, what faith, what courage, what triumph! And now, back from commercial break...

The priest dipped their feet into the water. And behold, verse sixteen, the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away at Adam. And those flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the salt sea, were completely cut off. The city of Adam is about twenty miles upstream, very far away we're told from where the Israelites were. And it seems to me that if the point at which the waters were cut off were that far away, the Israelites wouldn't have been able to see the waters standing in a heap. In other words, I'll speak for myself. At least I think we imagine this miracle wrong. See, I imagine this kind of like the crossing of the Red sea. Which is to say that I imagine this as that scene from The Prince of Egypt, with the walls of water towering above them on either side. That's not what they saw, but what they saw was equally baffling and equally awe inspiring. The moment the priests and by extension, the ark, touched the Jordan, the waters fled. That's how the Psalter actually remembers this. Psalm one hundred fourteen, verse three. The sea looked and fled. Jordan turned back. And then he almost taunts the river. What ails you, O sea, that you flee, O Jordan, that you turn back. In one instance a mighty rushing river. In the next a complete desert. That's what I think they saw. It's as though the waters ran away and were never there to begin with. Verse seventeen I think confirms this. And the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, not muddy or miry ground. Dry ground. And all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

In Joshua chapter four, verse ten, we are told that the people passed over in haste. And likewise we also need to pass over in haste. And so let me just highlight one detail as we sit between the Jordan here in Joshua chapter four, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, twelve men for each of the twelve tribes of Israel were to take a stone and erect a monument on the other side. But then we encounter a very curious thing. Verse nine we are told that Joshua also set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan. So apparently there were two sets of twelve. This detail seems to come out of nowhere, and it naturally raises the question, what's up with the stones in the Jordan? I want you to bookmark that in your mind, because we're going to come back to that at the very end.

But moving on to our third and final point beyond the Jordan, Joshua chapter four. Now verse fifteen, and the Lord said to Joshua, command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to

come up. Verse eighteen. And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests feet were lifted up on dry ground. You see what the narrator is doing again, right? Once again, he slows down. He zooms in. He has this watch the feet of the priest. In fact, he has us watch as the soles of the feet are now lifted up from the waters, and the waters of the Jordan return to their place and overflowed all its banks. As before, it is the precise timing of the waters running away and rushing back that makes this miracle so spectacular. And as the Israelites now find themselves beyond the Jordan and in the land, the narrator tells us when and where this took place. Verse nineteen. The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal, on the east border of Jericho. The tenth day of the first month in our calendar would be sometime in late March or early April. Springtime. As we've already established, and this date is significant because it was the exact day forty years ago that Israel selected the Passover lamb in preparation for coming up out of Egypt. In other words, the Exodus story has now come full circle. As Ralph Davis puts it, this day had marked the beginning of redemption. Now it marked its completion. The twelve stones are now set up at Gilgal, and for the second time now, the passage points us to their pedagogical function. Verse 21 and he said to the people of Israel, when your children ask their fathers in times to come, what are these stones mean? Then you shall let your children know Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground. As I said at the beginning, our passage isn't so much about the crossing of the Jordan as it is about remembering the Jordan. Listen to Brevard Childs on this point. The act of remembering serves to actualize the past for a generation, removed in time from those former events, in order that they themselves can have an intimate encounter with the great acts of redemption. Remembrance equals participation. Remembrance equals participation. Memories are vital to our lives, both as individuals and as a collective community. They shape our minds and they affect our view of reality. We look back in order to look forward rightly, even as the very end of our passage highlights, there's a two fold purpose to the act of remembering. Near the very end.

Now, verse twenty four, so that the wondrous works of God might be proclaimed to the whole earth, and so that you might fear God. And it is this fear of God that will now be so essential as Israel now looks forward to their life in the land. As we wrap up, allow me to go back to the Jordan one last time. As I said, it is possible for us to cross the Jordan and to miss the point entirely. When the twelve men picked up the stones and set it up in Gilgal. Joshua also took twelve stones and set it up in the midst of the Jordan. So as I asked before, What's up with these stones in the river? We may wonder, what's the point of setting up a monument that you can't even see? But remember, during most of the year, the Jordan is quite shallow. So those stones that would have been buried in the waters during the spring would become visible in any other time of the year. And so what our text implies is that in years to come, pilgrims would have journeyed to Gilgal to visit these memorial stones, and they would see a set of twelve on the land, but they would also see a set of twelve in the water. And why two sets of stones rather than one? I believe our text points us in the right direction. Verse nine again. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan. Here's the key in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood. As I chewed on this question, despite the seemingly spontaneous nature of Joshua's actions. It occurred to me that, as a matter of fact,

the text had actually prepared us for this detail all along. Because what's the focus of the text throughout? Or rather, who is the main actor of our story? It's not Israel, it's not Joshua. It's not even the priest. Who is it? It's the Ark of the covenant of the Lord. The same ark that the narrator turned our gaze to again and again and again. And indeed, it's because the ark, God's throne, God's mercy, God's presence. God with us. It's because that ark stood in the river that Israel crossed the river.

In other words, why two sets of stones? I'll put it like this. If the first set on the land reminded Israel of what God had done. The second set in the river, reminded Israel of how God had done it by standing in the Jordan. And now do you see the long shadow of the Christ stretched back across a thousand years, casting its clear reflection in the waters of this river? Matthew three thirteen Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan, and as Jesus reached the brink of the waters, John would have prevented him, saying, I need to be baptized by you. If not for the fact that Jesus insisted, let it be so, for it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. What was Jesus saying? He was saying, I must first be baptized for your baptism to mean anything at all. I must enter and cross the deadly waters first. As Jesus will later say about the cross, I have a baptism to be baptized with. And what's more. Not only did Jesus cross the Jordan, but he crossed it in the opposite direction. Whereas Israel crossed into the land. Where did Jesus go immediately after his baptism? Jesus crossed into the wilderness. You see, Israel was able to inherit the land because Jesus would be exiled from it. You see, that's the ultimate meaning of this text. God is telling Israel, in order for you to inherit my blessings, my promises, I must stand in the deadly waters. We are able to be baptized into life because Jesus was baptized into death. As Paul says, having been buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith. We are to remember what God has done in Christ precisely because in Christ God remembered us.

As you look back in 2025, what are the signposts that stand out to you in the spirit of this text? You may even sit down with your children and ask this very question. What do you remember about this past year? We can certainly do the same as a church for one, 2025 will forever go down in the archives of Briarwood history as the year that the Lord brought to us the Redd's. But 2025 is also the year that the Lord took many away from us. Either way, as the year wraps up, let me invite you to remember both the good and the bad. Both the encouragements and the discouragements, both the successes and the failures. But above all, remember the gospel. Do not let the Ark out of your sight, for it is the gospel that makes both your joys and your sorrows worth remembering. Have you ever considered this? It is the gospel that redeems our memories. Let me say that again. The gospel redeems our memories. Without it, at best, your memories are mere nostalgia, at worst their painful trauma. But because of what the Lord has done, our memories ascend to the status of signs. Signs that point us and remind us of God's providence. God's power. God's presence. To quote our lead pastor on this point, he says, memory is an act of faithfulness to God. It is an appraisal of the past that affirms history as the outworking of God's providence in this world. Because Jesus lives. Not only can I face the uncertainties of tomorrow, but I can face the sorrows of yesterday and the worries of today. And so, when your children ask you in times to come, what are these stones in Joshua

three and four mean? Remember to tell them this, that it means Jesus died and rose again. And that's why we can live.

Let's pray.

O eternal God of the heavens. We confess that our scriptures teach you are not in the least bound by time. And so when Christ died on that cross, its effects stretched back, reached back thousands of years, and redeemed the saints of old. And it stretches forward two thousand years in the future. And it redeems us who place our faith in him. Father, even as we sang earlier, we just ask that you would be our vision. We ask that you would help us fix our eyes upon the ark which pointed to Christ Jesus. Give us the eyes of faith to be able to assess our past, present, and future in light of what he has done. We thank you so much that because of what Christ has done, we can remember these things as an act of worship and as an act of thanksgiving to you. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen.