

Joshua told the people,

“Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

⁶ *Joshua said to the priests,*

“Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.”

So they took it up and went ahead of them. ⁷ And the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. ⁸ 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.’”

⁹ *Joshua said to the Israelites,*

“Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. ¹⁰ This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. ¹¹ See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. ¹² Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. ¹³ And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.”

¹⁴ *So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. ¹⁵ Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge, ¹⁶ the water from upstream stopped flowing.*

It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

⁴ ¹ *When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan,*

the Lord said to Joshua, ² “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, ³ and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the

Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”

⁴ *So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, ⁵ and said to them,*

“Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, ⁶ to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ⁷ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

There are times when we face an insurmountable barrier. Last time I preached on this passage was 25 years ago when we were wanting to reorder the church and about to face a Consistory Court. Maybe you are facing a very difficult project, or needing to restore a relationship that has gone bad, or a devastating illness. For us as a church the challenge of bringing our community to Christ. Maybe you are facing the trials of old age and of course one day we all must face the ultimate insurmountable barrier - death itself

After 40 years of wondering in the desert, after the death of their great leader Moses, it seemed the Israelites had reached a dead end. To cross the Jordan in flood was a terrifying prospect.



- a raging torrent at least 200 yards - possibly much wider.

No surprise then that they camped there for 3 days wondering what on earth they were going to do. It was bad enough knowing that they were going to have to fight a whole range of fearsome enemies *Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites* who would undoubtedly be defending their homeland to the death; but before the Israelites could even get there they had to cross this raging torrent.

Fortunately, even though the people had no idea what to do, God was not taken by surprise. Hundreds of years previously God had promised their founding father, Abraham, that He would make his descendants into a great nation. He then promised to give his people their own homeland – a land of milk and honey, where they would enjoy peace and prosperity. And God knew from the beginning that there would be huge barriers to overcome, including the Jordan in flood. But God was, and is, totally committed to fulfilling his promises and what's impossible for man is always possible for God. And even though most of the children of Israel were too young to remember, they had of course been in this situation 40 years earlier when fleeing the Egyptian army and trapped by the Red Sea.

God himself would deal with the River Jordan.

This story reveals so much to the children of Israel – and to us – about who God is

The Lord of all the earth 3:11, 13 Not just a local national god – *apply today*

The living God 3:10 *you will know that the living God is among you*

Not a dead, static idol

A God who keeps his promises. Central to this story is *the Ark*

'ark' 16 times in 3 & 4, 10 of which '*...of the covenant*

which the priests would carry ahead of the children of Israel.



the Ark of the covenant was a beautiful casket covered in gold. On top were 2 heavenly beings – 2 cherubim – covering the ark with their wings. This space above the ark, beneath those wings was known as the mercy seat. All the other nations had images of their gods, but this is *the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth*. He cannot be reduced to an idol, He is the Almighty, immortal and invisible Lord of all the earth. The ark represented the holy compassionate presence of God in their midst. A God who had made a covenant through Moses with the people of Israel. *Contained 10 commandments*

The ark also demonstrated another vital truth about God: **He is among you**

Not remote, disinterested, looking down from a great height

The children of Israel, needed to know that God was in their midst and so normally the ark would be at the very centre of their worship tent, the Tabernacle. But now God's people needed to know that his presence was living and active and powerful, that He would keep his promise to bring them into the promised land, that He would make possible what was impossible for them to do in their own strength, that he would enable his children to cross the impassable barrier of the River Jordan in full flood. ¹¹ *See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you.*

3 v.⁷ *And the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that **I am with you** as I was with Moses*

3:10 *This is how you will **know** that **the living God is among you** (the people)*

A God who speaks: 3:9 *listen to the words of the Lord your God*

the Lord is powerful 3:15,16 *the flood water, stopped flowing, piled up in a heap* How? 1927 earthquake at Adam caused a rock slip which blocked the River Jordan for 21 hours.

Maybe this what happened for the Israelites, but God's timing is everything!

This miracle would not only enable the Israelites to cross into the Promised Land, but would give them great encouragement for the battles that were to come.

*viz 3:10 This is how you will **know** that I will drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites*

It's one thing to know all these wonderful truths about God in our head, but it is another to *really* know – in our hearts, in the depths of our being, in a way that makes a difference to the way we think, and act and live.

And God wants us to really know

3 ¹⁰ *This is how you will **know** that the living God is among you*

4 ²⁴ *He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might **know** that the hand of the Lord is powerful* c.f. John 17:3 *Now this is eternal life: that they **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

John 21 v.31 *But these are written that you may **believe (truly know in your heart)** that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing/**knowing** you may have life in his name.*

How do we really know? This story has much to tell us

3:5 *"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you."*

Lev 11:44 *I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean. They would wash themselves, their clothes, ensure they ate no unclean food.*

So consecrating ourselves, means making sure that we are right with God, confessing our sin, getting rid of ungodly thoughts, opening our heart to God.

Come here and listen 3:9 God wants to speak to us: Do you give God that opportunity – Bible, prayer, silence, Sunday services, daily reflection "How has God spoken to me today"

See, 3:11 . ¹¹ See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. 1000 yards away have to look carefully, easy to ignore. Viz us and the presence of God

Act in trust and obedience even when difficult

3:2 *move out and follow the Ark*

3:8 *to priests: "go and stand in the river." – the raging torrent !*

10 *This is how you will **know** that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites,*

Not the end of the story

Problem 2 : Forgetfulness is the death of all relationships: *forgetting birthdays and wedding anniversaries; more importantly forgetting to show appreciation, forgetting to be loving etc.*

Forgetting is certainly the death of our relationship with God - if we forget He is present, that He loves us, and all that He has done for us in Christ.

And we so very easily forget what God has done for us – *During the 2nd World war there were 7 national days of prayer: 3 in 1940 alone – the first was with Dunkirk 350,000 men trapped on the beaches. Churchill expected only 30 – 40,000 to be rescued but miraculously 338,000 men were rescued. 2 more prayer days during the Battle of Britain when the RAF defeated the Luftwaffe against huge odds; then another day of prayer during each of the following years; 1941 Hitler about to invade Britain but turned east. How quickly we forget...*

On Remembrance Sunday we rightly remember the soldiers but tragically we forget the amazing things God has done for us.

God wants us to remember these things – as He did with the miracle of stopping the Jordan viz 4:5 take up a stone... 4:7 to be a memorial

Remind each other - tell viz: 4:6 & 7 children and children's children

This is why Jesus gave us *Holy communion* – to remember

This leads us back to:

The greatest challenge – facing death itself and not just death but death and judgement. The fear that we shall be rejected from heaven because we know we are not good enough. Just as it was impossible for Israel to cross the Jordan into the promised land, so it is impossible for us in our own strength to cross over into the kingdom of God. We would be swept away by the raging torrent of our sins and failures and guilt.

But just as God stepped in for the children of Israel and went on ahead of them and stopped that unstoppable flood of the River Jordan, so Jesus stepped in and on the cross took upon himself the entire flood of God's judgement so that we can cross over safely to the promised land. Like the children of Israel, we just need to remember, to put our trust in his promises and stick close to Him so that we may *know* Him and *know* that we have eternal life.