

Sermon Series: “Be the Church” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN — 1/10/2010

Title: “Stones of Remembrance”

Text: Joshua 4:1-7

Intro.: *Illus.: The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*

Theme: We pause to set markers of remembrance of our past so that we enter the future with humble thanks and awe-inspired faith in our God who saves us for a redemptive purpose in our world.

The context of our remembrances includes both the good, the bad, and the ugly

- Israel was in the process of a “crossing over”
 1. Forty long year march with a distant memory of how they got there
 - a. A bitter slavery
 - b. A miraculous, previous, Red Sea crossing
 - c. A mixed bag of rebellion and obedience and a lot of dead bodies left in the wilderness because of lack of faith
 2. Israel now had a renewal and a fervor as they were miraculously crossing over to possess a land
 - a. A new day and a new generation but still some of the same old concerns as their grandparents confronted
 - b. Hurrying thru riverbed to do something for God (take Jericho and the land) but thinking in their own strength
 - c. *Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:6*
- Some might say that Lord of Life has crossed over as we entered into a new building and a new phase of ministry
 1. But lest we forget there were some valuable tough lessons we learned
 - a. Living by our shoe strings during tough economic times in 01-03 and 08-09
 - b. Weathering natural (floods of 2003) and manmade (District, building, core membership loss) storms
 2. But there has also been much to celebrate as God has moved amongst us
 - a. Growth on a discipleship level (small groups, worship, mentoring, service, and giving)
 - b. Numerical growth (young adults, youthfulness of congregation, multiple services)
 - c. *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:30-31*

A glance back with a forward view to where the Lord is leading

- **Illus.: the purpose of a rearview mirror – “best view of FW...”/can’t drive a car that way/see oncoming traffic**
- **Joshua 4:1-7**
- A remembrance that involves everyone (*vss. 1, 2, 4*)
 1. Because we are “the people of God” just like Israel — our faith journey is not a solo trip but a mutual journey
 - a. **Illus.: Carried by Others**
 - b. Israelites couldn’t conquer Canaan individually; neither can we be the Church individualistically
 2. All of our stories are part of the great salvation story which God is weaving in history to be retold in heaven
 3. *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25*
- A remembrance that gives perspective (*vs. 3*)
 1. Rocks were to be taken out of the very middle of the river (at their feet) to remind that’s where miracle happened
 2. We forget the miracles that happened all along the way because we fail to retell them to the next generation
 - a. **Illus.: Remembering is Hard Work**
 3. *We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. Psalm 78:4*
- A remembrance that takes us back to God’s grace (*vs. 5*)
 1. God had the stone haulers go back to where the ark of the covenant stood in the middle of the river
 - a. It was a symbol of grace — place where blood of the lamb sprinkled to cover sins/symbol of God’s presence
 2. We must remember what church is – an assembly of the redeemed – purpose of our assemblage – dealing w/others
 - a. **Illus.: The main thing is to keep the “Main Thing” the main thing**
- A remembrance that is a “teachable moment” (*vs. 6, 7*)
 1. Why is today important?—for future generations to come– what are we leaving and telling them by what we leave
 2. *We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. . . Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. Psalm 78:4, 7*
 3. **Illus.: Markers to remember**

Remembering the Forgotten

The tomb of the Unknown Soldier



Purpose of rearview mirror



Carried by Others

The Jewish poet and storyteller Noah ben Shea tells a parable that serves as a valuable reminder of the roles we play in life: *After a meal, some children turned to their father, Jacob, and asked if he would tell them a story.* "A story about what?" asked Jacob. *"About a giant," squealed the children.* Jacob smiled, leaned against the warm stones at the side of the fireplace, and his voice turned softly inward. "Once there was a boy who asked his father to take him to see the great parade that passed through the village. The father, remembering the parade from when he was a boy, quickly agreed, and the next morning the boy and his father set out together. "As they approached the parade route, people started to push in from all sides, and the crowd grew thick. When the people along the way became almost a wall; the father lifted his son and placed him on his shoulders. "Soon the parade began and as it passed, the boy kept telling his father how wonderful it was and how spectacular were the colors and images. The boy, in fact, grew so prideful of what he saw that he mocked those who saw less, saying, even to his father, 'If only you could see what I see.' "But," said Jacob staring straight in the faces of the children, "what the boy did not look at was why he could see. What the boy forgot was that once his father, too, could see." Then, as if he had finished the story, Jacob stopped speaking. *"Is that it?" said a disappointed girl. "We thought you were going to tell us a story about a giant."* "But I did," said Jacob. "I told you a story about a boy who could have been a giant." *"How?" squealed the children.* "A giant," said Jacob, "is anyone who remembers we are all sitting on someone else's shoulders." *"And what does it make us if we don't remember?" asked the boy.* "A burden," answered Jacob. **Steve Moore, "A Graceful Goodbye" Leadership (Summer 2002), pp.41-42**

Remembering Is Hard Work

My friend Margaret mentioned that her husband, George, never could remember their wedding anniversary on March 7. One year, when they were en route to Australia, at five minutes before midnight on March 6, George proudly looked at Margaret and said, "This year I remembered. Just five minutes." At that moment the captain's voice announced, "We have crossed the International Date Line. It's now March 8." **Margaret Gunn, Mason, Michigan, "Lite Fare," Christian Reader (July/August 2000)**

Markers to Remember

Have you ever notice that we are a culture of markers. We have historical markers placed all around to remember things that at times seem superfluous or trite. We set up memorials to mark victories and tragedies; to highlight people of fame and infamy; to place markers and monuments on our graves to note a person who passed or to make one final lasting statement. We argue about how big or tall or expensive a monument should be. Sometimes, we stand at the foot of a marker, eyes filled with tears, mourning or missing the person they represent. All these stones of remembrance retrace some past historical event or figure so that the passages of time do not erase them from our memory. But God chose a marker—a cross and a rolled away tomb stone to help us always remember that He never forgets, never goes back on his promise, always will call to mind that we are his special creation for whom he died and for whom he now lives and years for us to live with him. Let, us never forget all which he has done for us as we step forward into the mist of the future so that we do not fret or worry or deny we know him. Let us always remind ourselves so that we never forget.

Joshua 4:1-7

Now it came about when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, and command them, saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.'" So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. "Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever."