

Coach House Church BEACONS

9TH APRIL 2020

LOOK BACK AND REMEMBER

There is a great event described in the Old Testament part of the bible where God displayed his power and told his people to never forget what had just happened.

Joshua and hundreds of thousands of people were to cross the River Jordan to a new land that God had promised for them. These were the people who had escaped from Egypt, been pursued by Pharaoh's army, miraculously crossed the Red Sea and then spent 40 years travelling through the desert ...up until this final move.

Joshua 1:11 11 "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.'"

This generation of people were in the main not the same generation that had left Egypt as they had spent so long travelling -40 years on the road. However, they knew all about their history. It had been spoken of; the events, in detail were described from family member to family member. At times in their wanderings they recognised how God had led and protected them and at other times they forgot. At times they were full of praise and admiration for the miracles they had experienced and a short time later were busy making their own plans to hurry along what they thought should be happening.

But what anticipation...in three day time...God would fulfil his final promise to lead them to their promised land. A place to finally call home.

Joshua 3: 14-17

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.

The river in full flood was stopped and they crossed on dry land. Furthermore, once the thousands and thousands of people had crossed over, it tells us in Joshua 4

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."

They'd remember God's promise to them and how far they had come

They created a memorial so that every time they looked at the stones they would look back and remember. They'd remember where those stones came from- the middle of a previously flooded river. They'd remember God's promise to them and how far they had come – from slavery in Egypt to owning their own land.

Some time later, in the history of the Israelites, there was a man called Samuel who was both a prophet, delivering messages from God to his people, and also a judge, making decisions and judgements in order to maintain order amongst the growing numbers of people. His story is found in the two books of the bible: Samuel 1 and 2.

The nation was forever under threat of attack by its neighbours. After a particularly turbulent time, when the people had turned away from God and were under threat from the Philistines (remember Goliath, he was a Philistine so they were big and tough and scary), Samuel called all the people of Israel together, saying:

" Turn your hearts to the Lord and obey him alone; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." 1 Samuel 7:3

He also gathered everyone at a place called Mizpah. Now this place was significant. It was a city on a hill, known as the watch –tower where the people were accustomed to meet in great national emergencies. The people gathered together, not to discuss strategies and plans, how to defeat their enemies, but instead to renew their vows to God, to humbly confess how they had neglected trusting in a holy God.

Meanwhile the Philistines thought they were easy prey, all in one place so, they mobilised their army and advanced. The Israelites pleaded with Samuel to ask God to save them and God answered, in a miraculous way: the bible says that 'the Lord spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven that day, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them.'

It was a miraculous victory. Like Joshua, Samuel commemorated this significant and timely victory by erecting a memorial-stone, which he called "Ebenezer". The word Ebenezer, in

Hebrew, means the stone of help. It was erected as a monument, in grateful remembrance of divine help, given in answer to prayer.

1 Samuel 7:12 12 Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer (which means “the stone of help”), for he said, “Up to this point the Lord has helped us!”

There are major life events that you never forget- like those mentioned above in the lives of Joshua and Samuel. There are times when you look back and see how God has guided, helped, protected and you never stop thanking and praising Him; when you recognise that the divine intervention of Almighty God was the only option.

But it is also important that we don't just remember huge happenings, experiencing the miraculous, something so astounding it takes your breath away. It is still important to look back and remember the everyday things – Up to this point, so far has the Lord helped us!

when you recognise that the divine intervention of Almighty God was the only option.

Now is a good time to reflect, to look back and remember, to be thankful for the basic, simple things of life. We spend so much of our lives rushing around from one thing to the next. Let's make the most of the space many of us have at the moment.

My neighbour spoke to me yesterday, over the garden fence. She is busy printing off photographs that have been stored on her computer- in a way they've been gathering dust and not looked at for some time. She has printed copies, written notes on the back and then given them to her children and grandchildren. They are a memory to past events- a way of remembering and being grateful for family, friends and shared experiences.

There's an old hymn that says: 'count your blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done!'

Remembering how God has provided for us is so important. God's greatest and ultimate provision for us is Jesus. We remember His sacrifice on the cross every time we take part in communion, with bread and wine. This is our memorial, our acknowledgement that Jesus' death and resurrection make it possible for us to connect with Almighty God, through forgiveness of our wrongdoings, mistakes and imperfections.

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Remembering the good events of the past helps us to focus on what is important in life. Thanking God for his keeping power, grace and mercy places God in his rightful place and is an

uplifting experience. So, far has the Lord helped us and he will continue to do so, when we put our trust in him.

Let's finish with Psalm 100: A psalm of thanksgiving.

- 1 Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!**
- 2 Worship the Lord with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy.**
- 3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God!
He made us, and we are his.[a]
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.**
- 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise his name.**
- 5 For the Lord is good.
His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.**



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