

## Crossing Jordan

### [Joshua 3:1-17](#)

This story should feel a little like déjà vu. We've seen this story before. Not too long ago we talked about Moses parting the Red Sea. For us the stories of the Red Sea and Crossing Jordan are being discussed within a few weeks of each other. For the ones living these stories, an entire generation has passed. Indeed, most if not all of the ones venturing to cross the Jordan River were not around for the crossing of the Red Sea and vice versa. The previous generation had passed on. The stories of that day remained and were told and retold to their children, but there is something different about experiencing the power of God first hand. Crossing Jordan required stepping out of a comfort zone and following God. For us, perhaps this story represents our own venture into evangelism.

Normally, during the dry season (remember Palestine had two seasons – a wet season and a dry season), the Jordan River was only about 100 feet wide. You may have expected that this event occurred during the wet season which is true. The children of Israel faced the Jordan challenge in the height of the wet, spring season. As they approached the bank of the river, they are told to camp for three days in order to prepare for the crossing.

Here is where we start to see some differences between the two stories. When Moses parted the Red Sea, the Israelites were fleeing from Egypt. There was very little time of preparation. Throughout the night God separated the waters of the Red Sea while keeping the Egyptians in darkness. The whole company was on the run, hence the time for prayer and contemplation was minimal.

With the Crossing Jordan story, things are a little different. The children of Israel were given a time of preparation; a time for meditation and prayer; a time to discern their call to claim the promise land. All their experiences of slavery in Egypt were second hand. They were not around to know what the life of a captive truly was. God was allowing this group of people to exercise their free will. Would they surrender to God and gain help in defeating an impossible situation or would they cling to hopes of other gods? For 3 days they were allowed to do some serious soul-searching to decide if they would launch into unknown territory.

I like the part of the story that I will read again for you from Joshua 3 verses 3 and 4. “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levite priests, then you shall set out from your place.

Follow it, so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before.” The children of Israel had a tangible guide – the Ark of the Covenant. They were to follow the leading of God into the unknown.

I think we have often felt we too were being asked to follow God into the unknown. For me it was the road to the pulpit. I shared with you my calling and how I wrestled with God for a full week after my ‘road to Mt. Tabor’ experience. In looking back I can appreciate the fact that God allowed me to make my own choice. God gave us free will. Sometimes we make wrong choices, but God continues to walk with us and lift us up when we do. I could have chosen to walk away from God’s calling. Instead, I chose a leap of faith.

I would like to share a scene from a movie that’s been around a while but is probably familiar to most of you.

Don't worry – the scene is appropriate for all ages! The movie is from the Indiana Jones series, “The Last Crusade.” In the movie, the main character has to face three challenges in order to obtain the Holy Grail. There is a part where he meets the third challenge that is interesting. In order to reach the Grail, Indiana Jones looks out of the mouth of a cave to what appears to be a huge void – a bottomless pit. He sees the entrance where he needs to be, but cannot see a way across. His father reminds him that he must take a leap of faith. Indiana physically calms his nerves and breathing, takes his foot and steps out on what he thought would be just air leading to a terrible fall. What he landed on was a path leading to the entrance which appeared hidden from his view.

A leap of faith – sometimes we have to take that leap and trust God to be with us. We are launching into new

areas of outreach and evangelism here at Mt. Tabor. I'm sure at times that will feel like a leap of faith. Our Halloween Party is this Saturday. Although you've had these before, things may have changed over the years. We've put the word out through signage and flyers – it's even on the WGTS website. But we have no idea how it will be received, and we need to make use of the opportunity to use this as an evangelistic event. We want to share God's love with others and I believe we can do that by holding a fun event for the community. We are visiting the San Mar Children's Home the last weekend in November. This is new territory for the UMW. We have no idea how we will be received. We have no clue if the children we meet will be even be interested in the projects we are taking to do. It's a leap of faith – God is sending us

and we will go. Every connection we have with the community is an opportunity for evangelism.

Some will probably be thinking – what exactly is evangelism? Some may have thoughts in their heads of TV evangelists, whether good or bad. We have ways of helping to meet the needs of our community on a very real level. If we hold a church supper, we are helping meet the needs of combating loneliness or busyness. If we hold a safe, chaperoned party for children we are helping meet the needs of fellowship so desperately needed among our young people. If we work with troubled teens on small craft items we are helping them with their self-esteem. At the same time, we are portraying Jesus in all we say and do. We are sharing an invitation to help folks find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When we welcome newcomers in our church, we are sending a message that

they matter and perhaps show them the way to find a real purpose for their lives. That's evangelism.

So the children of Israel had to choose. Would they follow God into the unknown and take that leap of faith? The rest of the story seems pretty familiar although no less miraculous. The priests took the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan and the water rolled back on both sides. The children of Israel did not trudge through muck and mire – they walked across the mile-long stretch on dry ground to step onto the promise land.

As the people of Mount Tabor, we too must choose. Will we reaffirm our belief in almighty God, who has already shown us great victories here in this community, or will we choose to turn away from God's calling? I invite each of us to spend time in prayer this week. As we pray, listen for God's calling. What is God leading you to do

here in this community? What is God calling you to do with this phase of your life? What is God revealing to you as your path to follow? Know that we serve an awesome God that can find a way when there is no way. Let us take that leap of faith while Crossing Jordan into the promise land. Amen.