

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

Sunday, April 29, 2018

Scripture: Joshua 3:7-17 (NIV)

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.

Congregational Prayer: “Our Father”

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

Message: "The 3:16 Trail: Heaping Waters"

Introduction:

- On average the Rideau River at Ottawa discharges

approximately 40 cubic metres of water per second, with peak flows occurring between February and May. During the summer when average discharge is around 10 cubic metres per second, it takes approximately 15 days for water to travel from the Lower Rideau Lake to Ottawa. I have one memory that I hold dearly: my first spring here in Smiths Falls when the banks of the Rideau overflowed all along the stretch through Smiths Falls. The noise of the water flowing past George Street was deafening, even a block away. Barriers were in place, and roads were closed to protect everyone as the volume of water was staggering. Now, here is where I want you to put your imagination into place: imagine that there are no bridges across the Rideau. You and 600,000 others need to cross the river to get to the land promised to you. And the waters are roaring. But God has sent you to cross, and it’s time to go. Even at the Summer rate of 10 cubic metres per second, how many of you would start to go? What about at 40 cubic metres? What about at flood time?

- Today, let’s continue on the 3:16 trail through the Bible, and take

the pathway of life through an obvious peril and directly into the world of God's strength and power - let's jump into the water, and see the dry, dusty ground on God pathway of life.

Part 1: Looking back

- We have started down the 3:16 trail here at First Baptist Church this April. The concept is simple: we noticed that chapter 3 of various books of the Bible have an amazing verse 16, and we wanted to see what we could learn by walking down the 3:16 Trail in God's Holy Word. We started with Genesis 3:16 where we saw God's plan of salvation, of life. Then we saw how God watches and cares for us in Exodus 3:16.
- Today we have moved ahead a few books of the Bible to Joshua 3:16 to the story of the crossing of the Jordan River.
- Let me give you the background of the Book of Joshua. The Israelites have been wandering in the desert for 40 years and it's time to go into The Promised Land. Now, just imagine the population of Ottawa all encamped on one side of the Ottawa River with their destination being the nation on the other side. Just

imagine 600,000 men plus their families all encamped in a vast mass of homelessness and it's time for them to cross the Ottawa River at the height of flood season. That is essentially our story as Joshua chapter 1 begins. The marching orders have been given.

The mantle of authority has passed from Moses to Joshua.

- Now keep in mind that Joshua is not a young man. Take a look at Numbers chapter 13:8, and you will see that Joshua was actually one of the spies that entered the promised land 40 years before this occurred (here called Hoshea). Joshua has already been a warrior for Moses, and went on to lead battles for the Israelite right up to the time of Moses give to Joshua the authority from God to lead the people into the Promised Land.
- Joshua, the warrior, will go on to fight some truly momentous battles in life as he and the people of Israel will one day conquer almost all of the Promised Land on both sides of the Jordan River all the way to the Mediterranean Sea and both north and south for quite a distance – land as far as the eye can see.
- But they have to get started. Every adventure begins with a first

step. Joshua has always been a leader under Moses. But now it is time for him to be God's chosen leader on his own. Between him and the promised land is a body of water – a raging body of water at spring flood time, and behind Joshua are hundreds of thousands of people who have been wondering if indeed they are ever going to make that first step.

- So let me pause just here and ask you a question – are you at the same place in your life? Are you at the place where God has promised you something and you can see it, but you don't know if you're going to get it? Are you at the place in your life when you know that God is good, that God has provided great things for you, and that God is so utterly amazing in His goodness as He has lavished gifts upon you, but before you is a huge obstacle, a momentous mountain of difficulty, an enormous question mark in your future? Are you standing there at the edge of your own Jordan River and wondering what God is going to do with you and for you next? Are you about to take a step into the unknown?
- Know this: the bigger the obstacle, the greater our God is! Know

this: the harder the journey seems to be in front of you, the greater our God will provide! Know this: our God is the God of the impossible, the God of the "I can't do." Our God is the God that stops at nothing, sees nothing as a barrier that cannot be overcome, and often gets us to the point where we have to climb up onto that barrier, onto that obstacle in our lives, in order to see His incredible goodness, His enormous love, His power and His authority. You might be standing at the edge of your Jordan, and wondering what's going to happen next. Joshua is about to teach us that each step with Jesus is sweeter than the one before.

Part 2: An Act of Faith

- So let's go on our 3:16 trail, and turn to Joshua 3:16. Here's what it says: "... *That the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarathan; and those which were flowing down towards the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho.*"
- I've gotta tell you – I love the story! I have to tell you, that if I

went down to the Rideau River know right now, or to the Ottawa River right now there ain't no way I'd want to go into any raging river at spring time. I remember being in London, Ontario where the sleepy Thames River becomes a monster at spring time.

Something like 100 Olympic sized swimming pools of water flowed through the Fanshawe Park Dam every single second at flood time. There was an enormous roar, and a huge volume of water. And there aint no way I would cross that river at flood time.

- And I can tell you this – aint no way I would cross over the Jordan River, or even step to its muddy, slippery banks when it was flooding.
- Think about the faith, therefore, that Joshua had. Think about the faith that the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant had. Think about the faith that the people had – hundreds of thousands of them ready to go into the place that God had promised to deliver to them, and as they too are standing close to the Jordan River watching Joshua and the priests. How many of them doubted, and how many of them were ready to watch God do a great miracle?

- How is your faith? Are you listening for God to call you? Are you ready to go to where He has asked you to go, ready to do what He has asked you to do? Are you ready to follow Him no matter what, even into places that don't seem to be wise? What are you doing right now? Are you playing it safe, or you're ready to take a step, a leap of faith?

- I want you to notice two things about this passage from Joshua 3:16:1. They took the step. Imagine the roar of the water. Imagine the wet banks, with the little puddles from the water that have been ebbing and flowing making puddles along the riverside. Imagine the smell, and can you feel the spray of the raging water leaping up over the rocks and the fallen logs at the edge of the Jordan that day? And now, imagine stepping in.
- You know God only calls you to take that step. God only says that you have to move for Him. You know that God sends you and your job is simply to go. That is what the priests did that day with the Ark of the Covenant. That's what Joshua did in obeying. And the people followed.

Part 3: God's Demonstration of His power

- Here's the second thing I want to notice from Joshua 3:16 as we walk down the 3:16 trail: God's power as this was a complete job. This was not a "somewhat," a "halfhearted," a "we just barely made it through" scenario that is played out here. Look at what 3:16 says: the waters rose up in one heap. The waters rose up a long distance away. The waters stopped flowing down to the Dead Sea. The waters were completely cut off. Now look at one more thing: verse 17 says that the people were on "*...dry ground in the middle of the Jordan.*" Verse 17 goes on to say that "*... All Israel crossed on dry ground...*" They crossed a raging, flooding river and all they got was a lung full of dust! Think about it! There were no mud puddles. There was no soggy ground. There was no need to weave around any stream that was left. All the people of Israel crossed on dry ground.
- What a miracle! What a great demonstration of the power of God! What a way for the people of Israel to recognize that what is going to happen next, as they move into The Promised Land, would be

only because God was with them. They would receive The Promised Land only because God was God and God was powerful. They would receive the Promised Land only because God is a God of miracles. They would receive the Promised Land not because of what they've done, but because of what God has done, will continue to do, and therefore will do in the future.

- Remember that our God has set up physical laws. Our God has used wisdom far beyond any of our comprehension to put into practice the way that things have to be for life and for health, but our God is a God who can throw the book out and do what ever He wants. Twice in the Bible it says that God can do the impossible. The first time is when the Angel Gabriel tells Mary that she is about to have a child who will be the Messiah [Luke 1:37]. The other Biblical reference to God being the God of the impossible is recorded in Matthew 19:26 from Jesus Himself, our Saviour, the Messiah, the one who died to give us life.
- Is there something in front of you that is difficult? Is life getting tough? Are you getting tired? Are you feeling oppressed,

overwhelmed, as if everything you do is a tough labour? Get ready
– you're in for a great ride with the Lord God of All as your guide,
sustainer and friend!

Conclusion:

- Waters arise all around and about us - sometimes when we do not know that they are coming - often when we do not know that they are coming. But know this: our God is the God of rough waters. Our God is the God of tough times. Our God is our deliverer. Our God is the overcomer. Our God is powerful, and there is no obstacle that He cannot or has not overcome.
- Are you ready to be an overcomer with Him? It's time to step into your raging Jordan River as you journey on the 3:16 trail with the Lord as your guide.
- So, Go! And jump into the raging waters of your Promised Land, and be ready to get good and dusty.