

# First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

November 4, 2018

## **Scripture Readings:** Joshua 3:7-17

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 (the Salt 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 stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

## **Prayer of Illumination:**

Lord, you hold the keys to all treasures, you hold the keys to heaven and to the kingdom of God. Open our eyes, our hearts, and our very being to hear your word. AMEN

## **Message: "River Stroll"**

Introduction:

- We all seen many of the pictures - a river in flood season. The

devastation can be so unreal - farm house, side roads, towns and cities lost underwater - people left homeless by the force of the river. I once saw a video of an ordinary farm - it showed an old house, much like picture postcard, a neat barn, and a row of greenhouses - and then, like a bad dream, first the greenhouses were eaten up by the flood waters and swept down river. Then as the water continued to rise, the force on the barn took its toll, and suddenly it too lifted, split into pieces and vanished in the swirling water. That only left was the house - the water seemed to be losing its battle here as the swollen river rushed toward the house, then parted and went on either side, seeming to be frustrated that the house was in its way. But then you could see what looked like some movement - and suddenly, as a unit, the entire house lifted from its moorings, it tipped forward, then, then started to fall back - for a few feet it floated downstream like it was a boat, then it too fell apart, disintegrating into thousands of pieces of memory.

- Rivers at flood time are not to be taken lightly. Many people have not predicted the force of a river, and have paid the price. Many have stepped into a raging river, and disappeared beneath its depths. Few have stepped into a raging river to find that, at their touch, the river

disappeared, leaving dry land.

- Such was the Hebrews incredible entrance into the Promised Land - three things should be noted about it: 1. They were ready: 2. they followed God: and 3. they entered the Promised Land

#### Part 1: Being Ready: Hear the Waters Roar

- They were ready: The Hebrew people stood at the edge of the Jordan River, prepared to cross, and take the Promised Land. They had gone through many steps to reach this point: they had survived slavery; they wandered in the desert for forty years - they went through times of being without food, without water - they survived the loss of an entire generation. And now, there they stood - full of God's promises, at the Jordan River.
- Others of their nation had come this far, sent as spies to investigate the promises land forty years ago (Numbers 13). Those 12 spies returned full of the examples of the fruit of the land (grapes and other produce, ripe and plentiful). They returned with their eyes full of wonder after seeing the land promised to their ancestors. They returned full of wonder, but also full of fear. They came back in fear that the land which God had given to them was impossible to take because of the challenge

being too much. The people were too plentiful. The armies too large.

The fortresses too imposing, said all but 2 of the 12 spies.

- In every life we get to the Jordan River. The obstacles before us seem to be so great. The strength of the task seems to be enormous compared to our weakness. We know that the goal set before us is from God, and is a goal which we have fought to achieve, and just when it is in reach, there before you is another hurdle, a large and imposing pile of trouble, insurmountable and imposing. It will take faith and courage to fulfil the task, to take the last step, to leap into the final act.
- You and I, believers in Jesus Christ, we must refuse to stop short of the goals to which God has called us. We cannot get caught up in the faithless game called double guessing. Doubting the might, doubting the power, doubting the Will of God in our lives is a faith-killer. Those nagging doubts are based in fear, and never on faith, and they will stop you on the verge of the your promised land. Fear is always a liar.
- Only two of the initial twelve spies, Joshua and Caleb, survived, and were ready to enter the Promised Land forty years later. And now, armed with God, and backed by a new generation, Joshua chapter 3 tells us that they were set to receive the gift from God, to step into His

Promised Land. They were ready.

Part 2: They followed God:

- Have you ever awaited a big event, and suddenly, bam! Here it is? Can you remember the excitement. Now put yourself into the sandals of the Jewish People in Joshua chapter 3. They were now an army. They were ready to fight. They spent forty years gearing up for this, and now they had learned to follow God. They became warriors for God, and were made ready. Along the way they have tried to do it on their own, to stand for themselves alone. But they had learned that, with God, their lives were good. Without God, when they were trying to do things on their own, trying to walk their own path in their own way, that their lives fell apart.
- And maybe you can relate to this: that when you walked away from God, when you tried to do things on your own, when you are turning away from the Lord, things don't work in your life. The Hebrew people tried this many times since leaving Egypt, but now they were a Holy Nation under God, ready to follow Him.
- BUT as they stood on the bank of the raging Jordan River in flood season (Joshua 3:15), the Hebrews, although ready to follow God and let

God lead, must have been wondering. Their first act of conquest was to be an act of faith. And their act of faith needed to be large: it meant stepping into the mighty, flooding Jordan River. After 40 years of preparation: after they became a family - a holy Nation under God with their leaders ready to take the people to God's blessing; after they learned to trust God, who had fed them, lead them to safety and prepared them for battle; after God even gave them a symbol of Himself - the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the sacred power of Yahweh; after all they had gone through, they were ready to walk in the faith of God. They were ready to follow the Lord.

Part 3: They entered:

- Imagine standing on the other side of the Jordan river - a mighty army had just emerged from the desert - they camped, made their plans, and were ready to move into the land of splendour. But you still feel a wee bit smug: they were on the wrong side of the Jordan, and it is flood season and therefore crossing the swollen Jordan River would be difficult - especially for that large a crowd. Imagine how funny it would seem to have that large an army ready to fight, but unable to get ready because the roaring waters of the river separated them.

- Imagine how strange it would have been to see the invading army being lead NOT by the scouts, NOR by the mightiest warriors, BUT by the priests, and them carrying a heavy box.
- BUT imagine the reaction of someone on the other side of the river when those priests touched the waters edge, and suddenly the river dried up! Suddenly the mighty water was held back - can you imagine the fear which one would feel at seeing such a sight!
- Many of us understand what it is like to come to our own river, and we think that we must cross in the way that everyone else does - but God calls on us to cross in His way - God tells us to DO what He has instructed us, and then He tells us how.
- How is your raging river? Do you have problems? Strife? Pain? Difficulties? Are you feeling overwhelmed? God has brought you to a place you know you should be, but what about the flood waters roaring in front of you? Understand this: God will lead you, guide you, direct your steps, and you too will walk on dry ground as you step in faith with Him. Don't try it your way. Go in God's way.

Conclusion:

- Back 10 years ago in London, Ontario, the city spent millions of dollars

on installing two special gates in the heart of the Thames River to control floods. Unfortunately the river proved to be too powerful, and in the end all the money resulted in nothing. The flood waters won.

- Floods may happen in our lives, but know this as we come to this table of Remembrance: God is in control.
- There is a song from years ago which sums up today's message: "When I think I'm going under, part the waters, Lord. When I feel the waves around me, calm the sea. When I cry for help, oh, hear me, Lord, and hold out Your hand. Touch my life. Still the raging storm in me."