

**We Will Remember:  
Lest You Forget  
Joshua 4:1-7**

At my house, wedged between the coffee pot and the refrigerator is a critical piece in the Mandrell home. There is found the family calendar and with our crazy household, we study it second only to the Bible. On each square of that grid, Lynley has taken time to list all the key dates that we must not forget. Birthdays and birthday parties, special anniversaries, scheduled vacations and travel plans, outside preaching events, church events, school events, and friendly get-togethers. It's all on there and it's a lot to keep up with. I'm sure many of you can relate. The Apostle Paul said a married man has divided interests and one look at the calendar confirms his wisdom. Family life is a full life and we so easily forget important dates.

The truth is, remembering key moments in the year is godly. It's important to remember certain things. I want to let you all in on a little secret. This is a box I had built for my family last year. I gave it to my wife but it is actually a treasure for our children as well. It is a memory bank. I asked one of our deacons to build it and I had a Scripture placed on the front. Psalm 105:5: *"Remember the wonders that He has done."* What I have been doing over the last year is writing down certain moments, memories that I will so easily forget. For example...

Here is one...

Here is one...

I don't trust my memory. I don't want to forget that.

You know, it's easy to forget your password on your email, and it's easy to forget where you put last year's Christmas ornaments, but some of the easiest things to forget are the golden moments in life, when a ray of God's sunshine broke through the clouds. This is just one way that I have found to preserve the memory of what God has done. I encourage you all to build a memory bank.

In the book of Joshua, chapter four, we find the people of Israel on the bank of a river. They pressing in on the Promised Land. Moses has died. Joshua has taken the lead, and the people are days away from combat. Over the river was a land flowing with milk and honey, but also over the river are armed Canaanite people, with big tall cities, and well-organized armies, and sharp swords that kill invaders. Imagine how those people felt that day--they were not known for military prowess. They were completely excited and completely terrified at the same time. To make matters even worse, the Jordan River was flowing at flood stage and it was no simple task for men, women, children, and cattle to climb down the bank, swim across the swollen river, and then climb up the bank. This all seemed impossible and what Joshua needed was a Moses moment. He needed God to come through for him and to unzip the river like He had unzipped the Red Sea.

And that's exactly what God did. Look with me at 3:14-17.

So you see, there were two miracles that took place on that day. Number one, God caused the water to “pile up in a great heap” upstream, and number two, He caused the soupy riverbed to firm up like pie crust. All the ladies, all the children, all the cattle and all the men crossed over the dangerous river with ease while the priests stood there in awe with the ark of the covenant in the middle of the river.

Now, notice what happens in chapter 4, as they make their way across the River and into their new inherited land. Look with me, 4:1-7.

These stones are to be a memorial. This certainly wasn't the first time that God had called His people to stop, pause, and remember. In Exodus 12, the Lord had instructed the Hebrew people to slay a Lamb, paint the blood over the door frames of their houses, and then wait for the angel of death to “passover” their homes while it claimed the life of Egypt's firstborn. After this happened, God commanded the people in this way:

***"Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. 25 When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. 26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' 27 then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' "** Ex. 12:24-27*

The Passover meal was to be celebrated as an annual reminder to the people that God had not forgotten them in the moment when they needed Him most.

Let me ask you: Has God ever come through in a big way for you? Has he ever answered a huge prayer? Has he ever blessed you in a way you never imagined? Has he ever parted a water and opened a door you never dreamed would open? I hope your answer is yes. And if your answer is yes, how often do you stop and remember these things? How often do express appreciation?

You see, memorials are about one main thing: showing gratitude. To remember what someone did for you is humble, and honorable, and right. This is true when we thank our parents, our spouses, our teachers, and leaders, but even more so, this is true of God. In Joshua 4, when the people passed through the Promised Land, they were commanded to stop and to create a lasting memory of the moment.

Now, let's look at the text and see who this Memorial was intended for...

### **Who Was The Memorial For?**

#### **1. It was for the adults who saw the miraculous happen. (v.6)**

Look with me, beginning at v.4...

Verse 6 says that it was to “*serve as a sign among you.*” People read signs. That’s why Cracker Barrel pays big money to advertise what they offer at the next exit. Signs catch our attention and they communicate a message. The people of Israel were commanded to build a large sign that would forever say, “God came through for you.” How quickly we forget.

Is there any wonder why Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper? He knew what was in the heart of a man, how easily men forget the power of God and the goodness of His provision. To prevent His people from ever becoming prideful, though, he said to his disciples, “This is my body, This is my blood,” do this in remembrance of me. Don’t ever forget the power of the broken body and the spilled blood. Don’t forget what I’ve done for you.

Is there any wonder why Christ commanded his followers to go into all the nations, and to perform a theatrical presentation of death, burial, and resurrection? That’s what baptism is. It’s a visual reminder, a sign, that communicates the power of God to turn a funeral into a wedding feast. How quickly we forget that our biggest problem has already been solved. Death has no sting, no power over Christ’s people. And so Jesus instituted baptism as a lasting ordinance for his people to remember.

How often do you think about your spiritual birthday? As Americans, we do an amazing job of celebrating the day we were born into the world? We buy cakes, and hang streamers, and open gifts, and we take lots of pictures. And we should! It was God who gave us life and breath and everything else. But how about celebrating the day we born into heaven? Both baptism and the Lord’s Supper are special reminders of the day when we were born into the kingdom. You and I are wise to think often about the gospel, about the day 2000 years ago when God came through for us. When’s the last time you thanked God for rescuing you from the fires of judgment? God has been good.

Now, let’s look back at Joshua 4. The Memorial wasn’t just for the grownups who could recall the day of passing through to the Promised Land. It was also for the little babies and the preschoolers. Look what it says in vv.6-7...

## **2. It was for the children who had no memory of the moment. (vv.6-7)**

Sometimes my children will look at the wedding picture in our house, and they will ask: “Daddy, where are you and Mommy in this picture?” And we’ll explain, “We are standing in front of the church, and we just got married. See how happy we are!” And each child will say the same thing with a puzzled look, “Why wasn’t I there?”

“Well, you weren’t born yet. This happened long before you were even alive.” Children never know quite what to do with that. By nature, they assume that God created the heavens and the earth on the day they were born in the hospital.

Children have no concept of history, and so, this is why it is important for parents to teach the children and tell the stories about what God has been doing in the past.

Brilliant Theologian D.A. Carson says it this way...

***Memory plays an important role in any society. Without a memory a person loses identity, and without a history to sustain it a society and the world around it become virtually phantom. Any society that hopes to endure must become, as sociologists put it, 'a community of memory and hope'. –D.A. Carson***

I agree. That's what tonight's Anniversary Event is all about. It's about hope, and the inspiration that comes through remembering God's power in the past. As a community, we must remember where we have come from so that we can move faster to where we are going. Building memorials is about showing gratitude, and God loves a grateful people. So the question I ask us today is: in what ways should we be thankful? As a people, what should we be thankful for?

Two big categories I want you to think about...

### **What Should You Be Thankful For?**

- **The hard times that increased your faith in the Lord.**

Has your family ever been through hard times? Joseph, in the Old Testament, he knew hard times. Once he was the favorite final son in Jacob's family picture, the one with the multi-colored coat, but life went in a direction he never dreamed. It began when his brothers threw him in a pit, it got worse when slave traders picked him up and carried him by camel to Egypt, it got worse when a politician's wife accused him of seducing her and he was thrown into jail for years. It got worse when he interpreted a dream for two captives and they completely forget that he had he even existed. Joseph's life was one hardship after another, a relentless beating of bad things. And yet, when the famine came over the land, and his Judas Iscariot brotherhood showed up begging for breakfast, it was powerful Joseph who looked them in the face and said,

***You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. Gen. 50:20***

When all the chips had fallen, Joseph was thankful for the hard times he had endured on Earth. He could see how God used the seeds of trouble to bring forth a harvest of good. Do you have the maturity of Joseph to see the world from that perspective? It takes a spiritually mature saint to say with Joseph, "What others have meant for evil, God has meant for good."

Many people don't know this, but Englewood Baptist Church has overcome many hardships. More than one time our momentum has been threatened and nearly stopped. When this church was first planted in the late forties, early fifties, the pastor R. E. Guy had few resources to build his vision. His dream didn't take off like a 747. Instead, through persistence and many sacrifices and with recycled wood and straightened nails, the first mission house was built and began to fill up.

Getting this plane off the ground wasn't the only challenge either. In 1973, the church had grown to 291 members and velocity was beginning to be felt. This train was picking up speed, when suddenly a fire broke out and nearly destroyed the entire campus. Pastor Paul Williams led our church with unwavering strength at time of true tragedy, just as our own David Dockery has led Union through a vicious tornado. God increases the faith of the leader as he increases the heat of the fire. Englewood has seen the hand of God through many "fires."

Natural disasters aren't the only threat to the growth and health our fellowship. Like so many churches, this congregation has seen staff members succumb to temptation and fall morally on their face. These satanic assaults could have split this church down the middle and left many families in the rubble, but Englewood has always chosen to pull together and stay together by the power of the Holy Spirit. God is bigger than our biggest mistakes and grace has led us onward.

We have never been a wealthy church. Our church has had years when finances were thin. There's never been enough money to do all that we want to do, but there's always been enough to move forward. I can recall a few years ago when the weekly tithes and offerings dipped and we spent 6 months watching the gulf widen. We lagged behind the budget by nearly \$200,000, but by God's goodness, at the end of the year, we came out even.

I thank God for the hard times and the storms that this church has weathered. And let me say this, we are launching a major emphasis this fall on reaching this city for Christ. I do believe with all my heart that Greater Things are yet to come in this city. Some say, this is not the time to try to pool money and gather resources. The economy is not ideal.

You know what? It wasn't a good time for the people of Israel to pass over a river either. It was flood; conditions were not favorable. But God said move. And proved to be bigger than a river, and He's bigger than a recession, and when He tells the spiritual leaders to get their feet in the water, then its time to get wet. That's what Englewood Baptist Church has done for 60 years and that's what we must continue to do as a people.

Now let me apply this on a personal level: when is the last time you thanked God for the trials that you have faced your life? When is the last time you listed the greatest obstacles that you have had to overcome, and said, "Lord, you saved me. You held me. You parted the river for me and I have never forgotten it." That's worship. Be thankful for the victories that have increased your faith in God.

#2, be thankful for...

- **The good times that increased your joy in the Lord.**

Paul said this to the Colossians:

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. --Col. 3:16*

Do you know who the best singers are? The best singers are the grateful singers. They may not have the prettiest voices, or the widest vocal range, but when grateful people sing, they sing from the bottom of their heart. They have never gotten over the love of God.

This past week, Bro. Paul and I officiated an outdoor funeral for Mrs. Mary Jones. She wanted that graveside service and 100 degree weather wasn't going to stop it. As he and I spoke in our suits and sweat rolled off my head, down my neck, onto my back, every few minutes a gust of wind would blow through the tent. That fresh air was so refreshing and reviving. That's what happens when a grateful person walks into a room full of complainers. Instantly, the whole room is changed. Gratitude is a powerful emotion.

Christians should be like a cool breeze blowing through a hot tent. When the Word of God dwells in our hearts, we feel rich. We feel like we have everything. We don't forget it.

And that is why God said to Israel, stop and build the tower of stones, so that...you will never forget how much you've been given.

Tonight, our church is going to pause and remember many of the good things that God has done in the last 60 years, and we're going to sing the roof off, but I also want to challenge you on an individual level. Here are two things I want you to consider as an act of obedience this week:

### **Two Ways To Apply The Remembrance Principle**

- **Host A Private Worship Event.** **This is between you and God. Take out a blank sheet of paper. Write down five times in your life when God came through for you. Record the details and the things that you remember. Then read it out loud to God and praise Him for parting waters for you.** In this way, you will remember the wonders that He has done. You will invoke the Spirit of God because God draws near to a grateful heart.
- **Shock Someone With A Special Show of Gratitude.** Has someone gone the extra mile for you in the past? Has God used a person to propel you forward in your life? If so, take time to remember. Write a letter and say, "This is what you did for me, and I have never forgotten it."

When I graduated from college, I felt called to enter a discipleship training program. It was a 9-month residency and I would receive some wonderful mentoring and equipping. The only problem was, it cost \$8000 and I had no savings. I could not find the money to make it happen. I wrote support letters, I made phone calls, but for whatever reason, people were not responding. So I picked up the phone and I called a friend that I trusted. I told him that I needed help. He agreed to talk to his wife about it, he called me back an hour later, and he said that a check was on the way for \$4000. My first four months of training were fully paid for. That was 11 years ago.

As I finished this sermon, I opened Facebook, I found his name. He and I have not spoken in couple of years. And in a few hundred words, I said, "Jim, I have never forgotten." Simply writing the letter brought joy to my heart. God has always come through for me. It's my job to remember.