

“Jordan River Moment: The Story of the Underground”

Joshua 3:1-17

August 7, 2022

Turn with me to the Old Testament book of Joshua, chapter three. Ten years ago, Rich passed on the Lead Pastor baton to me. The first sermon series I ever preached was on the book of Joshua since it was a book about the leadership transition from Moses to Joshua. I preached a sermon on Joshua 3 as part of that. If you remember the backstory, the nation of Israel, after 40 years of wandering in the desert, was on the cusp of entering the Promised Land. This was to fulfill a promise God made to a guy named Abraham centuries earlier. All the blessings of God were right in front of them! Only one problem, in between where they were, **(LCD) the cozy acacia grove known as Shittim**, and the Promised Land, is a river - the Jordan River.

Look down at verse 15 for a moment...the Jordan is at flood stage – it’s raging! In the spring, the snow melts and the spring rains come causing the river to swell from the normal depth of 3-10 feet to as much as 150 feet deep in some spots! And there are hundreds of thousands of men, women, children, and animals who need to get across! How?! This is crazy...but instead of turning back, Joshua urges them to go forward. Look at verse 9, *“Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. ¹⁰This 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. ¹¹See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. ¹²Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. ¹³And 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.”*

In my sermon, I called this a **(LCD) “Jordan River Moment.”** Joshua is calling them to walk by faith, not sight. He’s saying, “God, the living God, is promising to grant you huge victories and open a way right through this raging river in front of you...but you have to step in the water BEFORE God parts it.” That’s a “Jordan River Moment.” And this is crucial because our destiny, our legacy on this earth, will largely depend on the decisions that we make at key junctures in our lives – at “Jordan River Moments.” Maybe you’re deciding about a relationship you want to pursue – that’s a “Jordan River Moment” because the results of that decision will be huge down the road. Maybe you’re deciding about a new job or home or ministry – “Jordan River Moment.” Our choices in these kinds of crossroad places have massive, legacy determining impact. How can we choose well at these moments?

The answer to that relies on one key thing in this passage: the ark. If you’ve seen **(LCD) “Raiders of the Lost Ark,”** then you’ve seen a replica of the ark. It was a gold-covered box with golden cherubim over it and it was where the Lord would meet with His people. **Inside the ark (LCD)**, were three things: the Ten Commandments, Aaron’s budded staff and a bowl of manna – God’s word, God’s leadership and God’s provision. All that His people need to live with and for Him. **Following the ark** is a call for Israel **(LCD)** to

obey God's word, submit to His leadership through His chosen leader and trust in God's provision for their needs. Same with us – following God means walking wholeheartedly in these three areas by faith. How are we doing? As someone said to me after the sermon, **(LCD) “When the ark is in place, the river is not an issue!”**

And a big part of keeping the ark in place, is a healthy reverence for God, verse 5, *“Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.”* If we want to leave a godly legacy, seize our “Jordan River Moments” and inherit all God has for us, we need to be set apart to Him. One commentator said this, **(LCD) “The acts of consecration (like confession) remove the barriers to God’s power and to fellowship, and so prepare our hearts to receive God’s grace; they build our faith so we will put our feet in the water, cross over, and go up against the enemy.”** Little decisions of integrity - should I say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to that drink, to that woman in the office, to that offer of a big job with long hours, to that TV show with the compromised values – little decisions of integrity either prepare us or disqualify us from our “Jordan River Moments.”

Having consecrated themselves, God does indeed do amazing things among them the next day, verse 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.*

What specific thing had to happen for God to be glorified in this passage? The **priests (LCD)** had to step into the raging, flood stage water BEFORE God worked! How scary would that have been? But that is how faith works. We hear God and then He waits to act until we step out believing that God has power to do what He has promised. Are you missing your “Jordan River Moment,” missing seeing God do amazing things among you because you’re waiting for some total assurance that you’ll be okay? In his stirring book, “Seizing Your Divine Moments,” Erwin McManus shares this insight, **(LCD) “Our wealth and abundance of human resources have positioned us to accept a paradigm that provision precedes vision. This has been the foundation of building no-risk faith.”** Now I have to be honest here – I’ve been guilty of a no-risk faith. This is where I tend to miss my “Jordan River” moments – too afraid to risk.

So I closed the sermon with this question, **(LCD) “What am I pursuing right now that can’t be done unless God shows up in a powerful way?”** Am I living by faith at all? With expectancy of a great God who wants to do great things? Our legacy will be determined by whether we live by faith or not – whether we seize our “Jordan River Moments.”

Now someone who was listening that day was Annmarie Boulay!

We had spoken right before that week. Describe conversation in early August.

(LCD) Here are some of her notes from that sermon!

Next weekend, we had a staff retreat and God spoke to Annmarie even more specifically.

(LCD) The 10 steps God gave Annmarie

In September, we commissioned her to begin “spying out the land!”

First step was to go take a ride on the Berlin Turnpike. October 12th, saw **(LCD) Jordan sign**. Confirmation!

From there, she followed the 10 steps God gave her in founding the UGNE!

Describe the **(LCD) current work of the UGNE (series of slides)**

Show video of mentors and Teresa share. <https://youtu.be/d194T3XIMHA>

So I’ll close this message the same way I closed the one from 10 years ago, **(LCD) “What am I pursuing right now that can’t be done unless God shows up in a powerful way?”**

Pray