

#3 – A TIME OF TRANSITION (Matt Davis)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Joshua 3:1-4a; 11-17; 4:1-7

Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: 'When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before... See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. 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.' So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is in flood all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, 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. 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.

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 'Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.' So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, 'Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, "What do these stones mean?" tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel for ever.'

1. **Follow God's Presence...** The people of Israel had been led by Moses for 40 years in the wilderness. Now Moses is dead, there is a new leader and a new challenge ahead. They are about to enter the Promised Land. It was the focus of all their hopes, but Joshua knew (because he had been there already) that the challenge wasn't over. In fact, it had barely begun.
 - *'When you see the ark of the covenant [on the move]... follow it'. How can we apply this principle to our own lives in a time of transition?*
 - *Matt told the story about getting lost in a Southampton shopping centre because he didn't keep his eyes on his mum. Hebrews 12:2 says, 'Fixing our eyes on Jesus...' It's a great verse, but (in real life) what does it really mean to 'keep your eyes on Jesus'?*
2. **Transition isn't always straightforward...** It is very convenient when a flooded river suddenly stops flowing, leaving a clear path across, but it doesn't always happen quite that way.
 - *Have you ever experienced something like Israel did that day? Has God ever cleared a path through an impossible situation for you – something that felt like a miracle?*
 - *Has it happened often?*
3. **Tell your story...** Pick up rocks from the river. Memorials are important for nations, tribes, families and individuals.
 - *What is your story? Do you have family stories of what God has done? What about your 'tribe'?*
 - *What do you know of 24-7 Prayer and the Emmaus Road Church story? And the 2000 year story of the Church? Why are stories and memorials important?*
4. **Remember what you stand for...** "What do these stones mean?"
 - *What are our 'memorial stones', which remind us of what we stand for?*