

“YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN THIS WAY BEFORE” (Tim Hughes)

- 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 3:1-8, 13 (NIVUK)

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... Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.’ Joshua said to the priests, ‘Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.’ So they took it up and went ahead of them. And the Lord said to Joshua, ‘... 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.”... 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.’

“The world has changed,” says Tim Hughes, “and what lies ahead of us is new terrain. We cannot journey alone, and we cannot journey by simply doing the things we have done in the past... God wants to empower us to step into the new territory before us... ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.’ God is purifying his church. Why? Well, because a period of repentance and consecration will always precede a great move of God.” Perhaps the mountain before you looks too high to climb, perhaps the challenge seems too great. “How do we ascend these mountains? Psalm 24 says, ‘Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Saviour.’ (Psalm 24:3-5) ... We are contending for a great awakening because we know how desperately we need it. But we need to get right before God.”

- *How has your world changed in the last 18 months? In what ways does the ‘terrain’ of your life look different now?*
- *Are there things that you were doing in the past that don’t seem to be working anymore?*
- *How has your experience of the last few months changed you? Have you experienced God’s working in your own life in particularly challenging ways?*
- *What might it mean for us to ‘consecrate ourselves’ and ‘get right before God’?*

In 1913, *Collier’s Weekly* published a poem by Benton Braley entitled, ‘At Your Service: The Panama Gang’. Celebrating the men building the 50-mile canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans through Central America, it contained the memorable lines,

*Got any river they say is uncrossable?
Got any mountains that can't be cut through?
We specialize in the wholly impossible,
Doing things "nobody ever could do."*

Oscar Eleason, a Pentecostal evangelist, pastor, and poet heard the poem and, believing that ‘only God could say that,’ turned them into the gospel song, *Got any Rivers?* – “God specializes in things thought impossible. / He can do what no other power can do.” Later Eleason added verses based on the Joshua story.

- *Have you ‘got any rivers you think are uncrossable’ or mountains that seem impassable?*
- *For the Israelites, the miracle only began when the priests stood in the river. Only then did God do the humanly impossible. We are all called to be priests... Do you have a river you might need to stand in?*