

The Lord Will Do Amazing Things Among Us

Let's turn together to the book of Joshua chapter 3:1-5

ILL: in his book *Shadow Divers*, Robert Kurson writes about deep sea divers who search out wrecks to find hidden treasures and unlock historical mysteries. One of the best of those divers was a man named Bill Nagle. Nagle had an uncanny ability to dive down to dangerous depths and come up with prizes that other divers couldn't find. Kurson writes this:

*In the sport's brawniest era, [Nagle] was a man of the mind. He devoured academic tests, reference works, novels, blueprints, any material he could uncover on historical ships, until he could have stood in the dockyards of a dozen eras and built the boats alongside the workers... This insight gave Nagle two-way vision, as much as he understood the birth of a ship, he also understood its death. Ordinary divers would come upon a shipwreck and see the melange of bent steel and broken wood, the shock of pipe and wire as a cacophony of [chaos], an impediment that might be hiding a compass or some other prize. They would plant their noses in a random spot and dig like puppies, hoping to find a morsel. Viewing the same scene, Nagle repaired the broken parts in his mind and saw the ship in its glory.*¹

... a man is not inclined to give up when he sees in panoramas²

One of the great things about the Bible is that it helps us see life and history in panoramas. If we just plant our noses in what we see happening – it can make a person want to give up. I happen to be somewhat of a news junkie and often I'll read news that just makes me groan with all the evil and injustice going on in the world. It can be so disheartening. And then closer to home there's the constant trials and heartache and disappointments going on right around us. In the midst of all this, they say that faith is on the decline as more and more people are walking away from God and the church, saying that it's just not relevant to their lives. If we plant our noses in just what we see the day to day of life, there's enough brokenness and messy shipwreck in this fallen world that we might be tempted to give up or, as the Bible calls it, lose heart.

Joshua brings Israel to the brink of the Jordan River and with all the obstacles and bad news and danger lying in front of them, he points out the panorama of God's promises and power and says "**Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.**"

The Lord will do amazing things among you. When we're tempted to be discouraged and disheartened by the mess we see around us, let's remember that the God of Joshua is our God. He hasn't changed, He hasn't grown weak or lost His desire to do great things for His people. When we see in panoramas we see that God has done amazing things, is doing amazing things, and will do amazing things.

As Israel stands on the brink of all this in chapters 3 and 4 Joshua gives them three simple commands:

1. Consecrate
2. Follow
3. Remember

¹ Robert Kurson, *The Shadow Divers*, pg. 7

² *Ibid*, pg. 9

These three commands don't put the expectation on Israel to do amazing things, they are to get Israel ready for the amazing things the Lord is going to do.

1. Consecrate

⁵ *Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you."*

To consecrate ourselves is to set ourselves apart for God. The Israelites would wash their body and clothes, abstain from sexual relations, and confess their sin as a way of preparing mind and body for an encounter with God. It was a way to acknowledge that God is awesome and holy and not to be taken lightly.

God still wants to do amazing things among us and God is still not to be taken lightly. He is the Holy One of Israel. In the 1800's some men gathered to pray together in a cornfield in Dublin, Ireland and one of the men, Henry Varley, said these words: *"The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him."*

In that prayer meeting there happened to be a poorly educated, simple shoe salesman named Dwight L. Moody. He would later tell Varley, "those were the words sent to my soul, through you, from the Living God. As I crossed the wide Atlantic, the boards of the deck of the vessel were engraved with them, and when I reached Chicago, the very paving stones seemed marked with the words, 'Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him.' This uneducated shoe salesman became a powerful evangelist leading many to Christ. As he consecrated himself more fully to the Lord, the Lord did amazing things through him!

Consecration isn't how we get God's love and acceptance; consecration is our grateful response to being loved and accepted by God. Paul makes this clear in Eph. 5:1-3

¹ *Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children* ² *and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* ³ *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Eph. 5:1-3*

Consecration is this cooperative work between us and God where we let God clean us from the inside out. Is there immorality or impurity? Selfishness or greed? Anger or bitterness? Pride or self-pity? As beloved children of God these things are beneath us, they hurt us, and they limit God's amazing work in and through us. God wants to help us be cleansed of these things so that we will live a bigger, better life.

How do we consecrate ourselves? We need to start by being honest with God. We can't sweep sin under the carpet. We need to confess it to God and ask God to forgive and cleanse us of that sin. Here is an amazing thing the Lord has done: Jesus' blood shed on the cross is more powerful to cleanse us of sin than our sin is powerful to stain us. But consecration doesn't stop there – it also means asking the Holy Spirit to empower us to change. Consecration is an ongoing fight for holiness - kind of like the Israelites taking the land – there will always be the next Jordan to cross, the next enemy to fight, the next territory to fight for. But the Lord will do amazing things among us when we are honest with God and consecrate ourselves to His work.

2. Follow

Josh 3:2-4; 14-17

The question on everyone's mind is, how are we going to cross the Jordan River? Verse 15 tells us that God chose the harvest season to bring them to the brink of the Jordan, which is precisely when the river was at flood stage, meaning the river that is normally about 200 yards across is now about a mile wide, the waters are deep and the currents are treacherous. God chose the worst time for them to cross the Jordan which means it's the best time because God is about to do amazing things among them.

The Lord tells the priests to carry the ark of the covenant, which represented God's presence among His people, to the Jordan and the Israelites to follow. God's job was to make a way. Israel's job was to follow.

This is a picture of the Christian life. Jesus says, "follow me". Being a Christian is more than joining a club, or believing some things, it's entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ, where he leads and we follow. One beautiful difference is that the Jews were to keep their distance from the ark – two thousand cubits is more than a half mile away, but Jesus invites us to walk with him side by side in intimate friendship and fellowship.

Remembering this helps us keep a panoramic view of our lives. When you accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, he became your shepherd and you became his sheep. He is leading you and he will guide you with love and care. What dangerous rivers or enemy strongholds lie ahead of you? You don't know. What you do know is that Jesus will be with you and lead you safely through till the end.

Sometimes Jesus leads us beside still waters...and sometimes he leads us into turbulent waters because he is going to do amazing things among us. I was touched this week to watch a video of the brother of Botham Jean, a man shot down in his own apartment by Amber Guyger, a policewoman who mistakenly thought she was entering her apartment but was on the wrong floor. Guyger's social media had expressed many violent and racist comments and for the family of Botham I can't imagine more turbulent waters. But Botham's brother, Brandt expressed love and forgiveness to Amber saying that he wanted only the best for her life and that she would come to know Jesus. Then he asked the judge if he could give Amber a hug. I wondered how Amber would respond, but she literally cling to him sobbing, she didn't want to let go. She just kept hugging him like a drowning person would cling to a life preserver. This is a tragic situation full of twisted steel and broken wood of devastated, shipwrecked lives. But somehow Brandt saw a panoramic view of Amber's life that wanted God to untwist the twisted steel and broken wood and restore her to the glory God created her for – the glory of being a redeemed, forgiven, daughter of God. They are turbulent, tragic waters, but through Brandt the Lord is doing an amazing thing.

Because the most amazing thing the Lord does is restore broken, bent, twisted lives for His own glory. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. And He wants to use you and me to do that amazing thing! Let's be ready to follow him into those opportunities to share the love of Jesus with others.

Maybe you feel like you're standing on the brink of some turbulent waters that are too strong and too deep for you to ford. Or maybe you know someone who is at the brink of turbulent waters and the Lord is asking you to help them cross them. Trust that the Lord didn't bring you there to let you drown, He

brought you there so He could do amazing things for you and through you. He will bring you safely to the other side. He will make a way where there is no way. He promises.

One last thought about following Jesus: this moment at the Jordan is a foreshadowing of the greatest hope we have in our Joshua, Jesus Christ. The river Jordan has long become a symbol of death. In John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, the last obstacle standing between Christian and his friend Hopeful and the Celestial City is the dark river of death. One day every one of us will come to the shores of that dark river – unless Jesus returns first – and what will be our hope then?

If our hope is in ourselves, that we've been good enough, or religious enough, or smart enough, or anything enough, then we will never make it across the dark river to the Celestial City. But God has done amazing things through Jesus Christ by making a way for us to cross that dark river safely and enter the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

...giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col. 1:12-14

When that day comes, we may cry out as Christian did, *the waves are swallowing me up!* But if our faith is rooted in Jesus Christ, then those dark waters will never drown us and our Lord will carry us safely to the other side. He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and brought us (safely) into the kingdom of the Son he loves. The Lord has done amazing things for us!

3. Remember

Josh 4:1-3; 20-24

The Lord told them to choose twelve men, one from every tribe, to carry a stone from the middle of the river bed and pile them up as a memorial. Every time they passed by the memorial, they would remember the amazing thing the Lord had done. When their children would ask, what does this pile of stones mean, they would tell them the story of God's holding up the waters until they had crossed over, so that their children, and their children's children would know the powerful hand of God and fear Him.

Remember. When God answers a prayer, when He does an amazing thing, when you see the hand of God, even if it's one finger at a time, remember. Be intentional, write it down, tell it to your kids. Remember.

We have stories in our family – as all families do – that we love to share over and over again. “Remember that time when...?” “Remember when we did such and such?” “Remember when Jenn...or Jared...or Matt did that?” When we share those stories and laugh at the memories, it's more than transmitting information, it stirs affections and warm memories.

When we remember the amazing things the Lord has done, it stirs up fresh thankfulness for what He has done and fresh faith for what amazing things the Lord will do. Remember.

The Israelites took stones from the middle of the miracle and piled them on the shore as a testimony. We have a better memorial than stones, Jesus gave us communion as a lasting sacrament by which we

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remember. Remember that the most amazing thing the Lord has ever done is Jesus died for our sins. Remember the most amazing thing that Jesus' blood cleanses us of guilt. Remember the most amazing thing that Jesus paid our debt so we could be restored to our heavenly Father.