Great is God’s Faithfulness
Joshua 4:1-24

Many years ago there lived a man named Thomas Obadiah Chisolm. Thomas wasn’t a wealthy man, a popular man, or even a very “successful” man in the eyes of the world. He was a simple ordinary man. He was born in a modest cabin in Franklin, Kentucky. At the age of 27 he gave His life to the Lord was saved. He soon surrendered to full-time ministry and began pastoring his first church at age of 36. However, his pastoral role would quickly be ended due to poor health. In fact, his health became so fragile that he spent most of his adult life in pain and many of his days were spent in bed completely unable to perform the most basic tasks that we take for granted. On his good days he found whatever work he could find in order to pay the bills. He also continued to minister in whatever ways he could. While his physical life was constantly weak and hampered by illness, his spiritual life was strong and vibrant. He had a deep love for the Scriptures. One of his favorite passages of Scripture was uncommon to most, but it was His theme verse, Lamentations 3:22-23, “The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease. For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.” Though he faced health problems and hardships he found great comfort in these words of Scripture. Thomas had knack for words and would often write poems based upon the Scriptures. In 1925 while pondering this verse he put these words to pen. “Great Is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father! There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Though changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not. As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be. Great Is Thy faithfulness, Great Is Thy faithfulness, Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided Great is Thy Faithfulness, Lord unto me!” Of course, these words didn’t become famous until 20 years later it was sang at the Billy Graham crusaded. But, the message was loud and clear. God is faithful. In fact, even as Thomas’ life neared the end he said, “I must not fail to record the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.”

Have you ever been there? I hope you can relate. Crosslink Community Church, we love, worship, and serve a Faithful God Who has been so good to us. Today we are having a legacy celebration. Today we are taking time to remember the past three years, but let it be known above all things that this is not a celebration of a campaign, a building, or even a group of people. Today we are celebrating our Faithful Father. Today we are celebrating what He has done, what He is doing now, and what He is going to do in the future. This Legacy is all about Him.

Such was the case in Joshua 4. The Israelites were in an exciting place. They had recently wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. They had also gone through a recent transition as their beloved leader Moses was now gone and a new leader named Joshua was now there to lead them into the land that had been promised to them. For 40 years they had waited for the fulfillment of this blessing and the time had finally come. Now, even though the land had been promised to them they would still be tested and challenged. There were still obstacles that stood in the way. The first obstacle that had to be crossed was the Jordan River. If you look back at Joshua chapter 3 you will see that the Israelites needed to cross the Jordan River in order to enter the Promised
Land, but they could not cross this river because it was at flood stage. So in Joshua 3:3 God told him to direct the priests to step out in faith and dip their feet into the water. Now, I’m sure that this must have been frightening to the people. **ILL:** I probably would’ve asked, “Lord, are you sure about this? So, you’re telling me that you want me to take the precious ark of the covenant and have the priests step into the deep waters and when they do the water will part? You’re sure about this?” And God says, “Exactly.” So they obeyed the Lord and everything happened as the Lord had commanded. Literally at their obedience God immediately cut off the waters of the Jordan River. The waters that were flowing were immediately brought to a stop. Then all of these Hebrews, estimated between 2-3 million, crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. It was a miraculous and monumental moment. Then right on this heals of this occasion God called them to do something specific. I believe as we celebrate what God has done we would be wise to follow their example. God wants us to do something specific This is where we pick up the passage this morning.

As the whole nation crossed the Jordan River the Lord told Joshua to have twelve men from each of the tribes of Israel to pick up a stone from the base of the Jordan River. They each obeyed, picked up a large stone and carried it about eight miles to a place called Gilgal where the people camped for the night. When they arrived at Gilgal they set up the stones as a memorial of what God had done for His people. In other words, God commanded them to set up memorial stones because there are some things that we must never forget. This may sound contradictory, but this isn’t the case. Yes, there are times that we must “forget what lies behind” and there are times that we must not “look back” because many can allow their past to hinder them from what God is wanting to do today. Sometimes we will allow the failures of the past to defeat us and we allow the victories of the past to deceive us. In those cases, we must continually be looking forward to what God is calling us to do today. However, that doesn’t mean that we should avoid the past altogether. God commanded the setting of these memorial stones so that they would remember Who He was and what He had done for them. The first purpose of these stones was to cause them to remember certain things about God and His faithfulness in their lives. Given man’s tendency to forget it is little wonder then that memorials have frequently played an important role in biblical and secular history. The reality is that we can be a very forgetful people. **ILL:** Maybe you heard about a guy named John who had a really horrible memory. One day John ran into a friend whom he had not seen in a long time. He greeted him & said, “Bill, do you remember what a bad memory I had?” Bill answered, “Yes, I certainly do.” “Well, it’s not bad any more. I went to a seminar that taught us how to remember things. It was a great seminar, & now I have a wonderful memory.” Bill answered, “That’s great! What was the name of the seminar?” “Well,” John said, “wait a minute, my wife went with me. I’ll ask her.” He turned & saw his wife nearby. Then he turned back to Bill & said, “What’s the name of that flower with a long stem & thorns & a red bloom?” “Do you mean a rose?” Bill answered, “Yeah, thanks,” John said, “Hey, Rose, what’s the name of that seminar we attended?” We may laugh, but the reality is that if we are careless we can even forget some of the great ways that God has worked in our lives to show His will and favor. God doesn’t ever want us to forget what He brought us out of and what He has brought us into. The Bible tells us that it is very important to remember all of the marvelous things that God has done for us. Deuteronomy 6:12 says,
“Beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

These 12 stones were there as a reminder of what God had done for His people. He was in essence saying, “Don’t ever forget how I brought you out of Egypt, divided the Red Sea, fed you manna in the wilderness, parted the Jordan River, and brought you to a place of victory.”

Crosslink, as we gather here today to celebrate what God has done, I believe that He is saying to us, “Don’t forget Me. Don’t forget where I brought you from and where I am taking you to. Don’t forget how I have gone before you and given you the victory.” I believe that God is calling us to remember three things.

I. **Remember God’s Promises (vs. 1-8, 15-20)**

God had clearly established a covenant with His people. He had promised to bless them and be with them. He had promised to give them a specific land. The whole thrust of Joshua chapter four is that God is fulfilling His promise. We learn several truths about God as He fulfills His promises.

A. **His Unwavering Presence**

God is always with His children. Even before this group was on the scene in Joshua 4 God was already at work in their midst. He was already going before them revealing Himself and assuring of His presence. To Isaac in **Genesis 26:3** God promised, “Sojourn in this land and I WILL BE WITH YOU and bless you, for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.” In **Genesis 28:13-15** God gave the promise to Jacob. Verse 15 says, “Behold, I AM WITH YOU and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” God gave His clear promise and confirmed it through His divine presence. Moses and Israelites experienced this directly as God was with them and led them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Then as Moses came to the end of his life in **Deuteronomy 31:6** he addressed the people saying, “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them (their enemies), for the Lord your God is the one who goes WITH YOU. He will not fail you or forsake you.” Of course, God gave the same promise of his presence personally to Joshua in **Joshua 1:5,9** summarizing that He would be with him wherever he went.

We must take time to remember God’s presence. I guarantee you that by the time they crossed that Jordan River and got all the way to Gilgal, they were remembering the presence of God. Gilgal was located only 2 miles from Jericho and became a headquarters and home base for them. So, they would go out during the day to conquer new lands and they’d come back to camp at Gilgal each night. I’m sure they’d come back in the evening after walking around those walls of Jericho and would look and see those stones and would be reminded that God was with them. But, there would also be a battle in Ai where they had been defeated. And I’m sure that even in the midst of serious defeat they’d look at those stones and be reminded that God was with them. Even though they
experienced some hardships in AI, God was with them as much there as He had been with them when the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

Thank God for His presence. It is unwavering – never shaky, never questioned, never doubted. Just as God had promised to be with them He has certainly promised to be with us. **Hebrews 13:5b-6, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you, nor will I forsake you.’ So that we confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid of. What will man do to me’?”** Jesus clearly promised to be with us. As Matthew concludes his gospel he ends with Jesus’ promise, “and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age,” **Matthew 28:20.**

Friends, we must thank God for His presence. **ILL: Crosslink,** through this Legacy Campaign God has shown His presence in amazing supernatural ways. This legacy campaign wasn’t really about the building, it was largely about what God was doing in the hearts and lives of people. Think of all the changes that God has led in over the past three years. Throughout this process the church gained autonomy from her mother church and officially changed its name. New ministry models were adopted with a revamped Kidslink, community groups were established in homes, the hospitality ministry was reenergized and refocused, and a 3 semester serve schedule was implemented. New volunteers have gotten involved, striving with excellence to give God their very best. All of this was done peacefully and God has blessed it. Additionally, God led the church to develop many new mission partnerships and outreaches in the community (Salvation Army and Ava Care) and beyond (Bosnia, Haiti, Nicaragua, etc.). It is clear God has been with Crosslink and has demonstrated His presence in amazing ways. Let’s give Him praise Church! Our God is with us and He is faithful!

**B. His Unlimited Power**

How does God keep His promises? By displaying His unlimited power. Simply put there is nothing that God cannot do. **Luke 1:37** says it best, “For nothing is impossible with God.” How great and mighty is God? **Isaiah 66:1** answers it well, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool’.” God is omnipotent which means He Has all power and authority. We see that clearly in Joshua 3-4. Can you imagine being there on that day? Can you imagine those priests stepping their feet into the water and because of the Lord’s power all of a sudden the river parts and the ground is completely dry and they walk through on dry ground. In human strength that is completely impossible. We could do nothing of that magnitude. Yet, this was nothing for God. In fact, this wasn’t even the first time that they crossed a body of water on dry ground. God was calling them to remember His power and what He had done for them. There would be challenging days ahead of them. There would be enemies that would seek to destroy them. There’d be times when they’d have to have faith and trust Him, and in those times they’d need to be reminded about the power of God. As they looked at these stones they’d constantly be reminded of the Lord’s Power. They’d constantly be reminded that they hadn’t done any of these things on their own. He had gone before them and had done the work. And what I’d say to you this morning is simply this. He
who created this whole earth in 6 days and then rested, He who parted the Jordan River, He who sent His only Son to die on that cross for sins and was raised three days later, this same Almighty yet gracious God can show His power in your life and in our church today.

Even as I stand here I think about the ways that God has shown His power over the last several years. **ILL: Crosslink**, one of the greatest evidences of God’s power through this Legacy campaign has been in how He has unified every aspect. He unified the pastoral search team as they prayed and sought the Lord for His direction. He unified the Pastor’s Council to exercise wisdom, patience, and discernment as they walked through unchartered waters. God unified the staff by bringing a strong cohesiveness and comradery. The staff has led with zeal, courage, willingness, and devotion to making sure that God gets the glory. Not only that, but God has unified the church body. During this whole time there has not been major division or dissension. Do we realize that two of the biggest challenges that a church can walk through have occurred here in the past few years? Most churches have significant problems when they start building and raising funds. Other churches have problems when the lead pastor leaves. Crosslink has gone through both of these things, but because they were willing to trust God, willing to follow their pastoral leadership, and striving to live in unity God powerfully unified this church. In fact, I guarantee that Crosslink is in very rare company to welcome a new lead pastor and open a new worship center within a 30-day window. That is evidence of God’s power. But, without question the greatest demonstration of God’s power has been seen in the number of people who have been saved and baptized. Throughout the course of this Legacy campaign there have been 159 people baptized, 148 new members have joined, and the average worship attendance has increased over 120 people a week. God has been so good to Crosslink.

“It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent.”
– Jeremy Taylor

**C. His Unending Provision**

How else did God fulfill His promises? By day in and day out meeting the needs of His children. God provided for them in amazing ways. He provided their direction in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and by fire. He provided their water by turning bitter waters sweet and by causing water to flow from a rock. He provided their food by sending manna from heaven. When they complained about no meat, even then God provided quail to eat. God patiently and persistently met the needs of His children. These were supernatural provisions. **Deuteronomy 29:5** the Lord says, “I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot.” This amazing provision by God.

There is a powerful word of warning here, though. God commanded them to establish these memorials stones so that they would always remember. I think that says something about human nature. We must careful to never forget the source of our provision. These
Israelites were about to enter this promised land flowing with milk and honey. In a place of great blessing it would be easy to forget the Lord. In a place of great blessing we must be sure not to take our eyes off of the Blesser. I praise God for His provision. **ILL:** Crosslink, God has provided miraculously for us here. All throughout this Legacy campaign God has provided. God has certainly provided the funds. Nearly $900,000 has been given and people continue to give. Even people who have moved away have still fulfilled their commitment to give. God also provided the people to do the work. He blessed us with Ricky doing the construction at cost. He blessed us with people in the congregation who had specific skills who were willing to sacrificially give of their time to help complete the building. People like Stacy Meyerhoffer, Randy Inman, Stacy Lam, and many more – all were gifts given by God to bless this body of Christ. God provided us with great relationships in the community with the Fair Grounds, JMU, and with many other businesses that have been a great blessing. God even worked out the details when it looked like we weren’t going to get the electricity hooked up in time which would have pushed everything back weeks or months. Pastor Michael called everyone to pray. We prayed and God provided. Twenty-four hours later another company showed up out of the blue to hook up the electricity. God provides. Personally, there is no doubt in my mind that one of God’s greatest acts of provision in this process was when God provided a new lead pastor. I don’t mean that arrogantly. I say it this way because I believe that God was very strategic in what He did. I believe if you were to talk with the pastoral staff you would hear how smooth this transition has gone. I believe this is the case because I already had relationship with this church, with most of its pastors, and most pastor’s council members. It is amazing! I want you to know that I was completely happy in Christiansburg and had absolutely no reason to leave. But, on February 2 God called me and I knew that had to say, “Yes.” I am simply saying, “Praise God. He provides.”

“We can be certain that God will give us the strength and resources we need to live through any situation in life that he ordains. The will of God will never take us where the grace of God cannot sustain us.” – Billy Graham

II. Remember God’s Preparation (vs. 10-14)

This may sound like a strange part of the passage, but I believe that every Word from God is important and has been divinely placed there for a reason. Picture the scene for a moment. This is a time of great amazement as the people cross the Jordan River on dry ground. This is a great time of celebration as their first obstacle is literally dried up so that they can proceed further. This is a time of great remembrance as God calls them to set up these memorial stones. But, Joshua understood something that we must all understand today. Joshua understood that we are never off duty when it comes to living for and standing strong for the Lord. It is our human nature to seek a break. It is our human nature to want to rest and relax. It is our human nature to become complacent and apathetic. Joshua understood that it would have been easy for the people to have stopped here. “Hey, we are free. We got out of Egypt. We’re no longer wandering in the
wilderness. We even got past the Jordan River. Let’s just settle down right here.” But Joshua knew that God was calling them to something further than they could see or comprehend. Joshua knew that there were still battles to be fought, victories to be claimed and lives to be changed. Notice what Joshua did, He had the sons of Ruben and of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh cross over the river in full battle array. In other words, they were prepared and ready for battle. They knew that there was more to be done and they knew that their enemy was real. Please hear me well this morning, “We are never more vulnerable than we are on the heels of great victories.” When we experience great victories we seem to let off. We think, “We’ve got this. We’ve been here before. We’ll be fine. We’re just going to sit back, catch our breath, and take it easy for a while.” But, I’m telling you this morning that our enemy actively seeks to divide and destroy. Our enemy, the devil, is actively blinding the eyes and minds of thousands in this community who need to be saved. Our enemy is not taking a break and neither can we. **ILL: Crosslink, I have been in this place before. It would be easy to think that we’re finally there. We’ve accomplished it. The worship center is complete. But I beg you, don’t let apathy settle in. I have served in a church where this happened. Don’t take your hand off the plow. Don’t take your foot off the gas. Don’t take your eyes off the prize. Don’t turn your heart to other affections. This isn’t the time to stop giving, stop serving, stop going, to stop sharing. This is the time when it is needed the most. He has brought you out of the wilderness to bring you into the promised land, but there is still work to be done. In this valley, in this region, in this church, in this facility – there is still much work to be done. We must keep our hand to the plow. We must continue to serve, give, share, and invite. Will you arm yourself for battle? In order to walk in the promised land we each have a part to play.

God had prepared a leader and God had prepared the people. Now they had to walk forward.

“God’s strength behind you, His concern for you, His love within you, and His arms beneath you are more than sufficient for the job ahead of you.” – William Arthur Ward

III. Remember God’s Purpose (vs. 21-24)

The stones were a visible reminder of the faithfulness of God. As with other memorials in the Old Testament, the intention of the memorial was to bring attention to provoke questions. I’m sure as people arrived at Gilgal they were amused by these stones and began to ask questions concerning the purpose and significance of those stones. This was the main purpose for the stones. People who heard the truth would know that the Lord alone is God. It has always been God’s plan that the whole world should “know” that He is the only living God. The message in that day was very clear – There is no God like the God of Israel. He is greater than all and He is worthy of our total worship and surrender. In the same way, we need to be reminded that God’s purpose for us today is still the same. It is still our calling to make Him known to the ends of the earth. Our chief calling from the Lord to be witnesses to a lost and dying world. I love the way that we are reminded of this in 1 Peter 2. In verse 5 the Bible says about all believers, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” So, think of that for a moment. In the Old Testament God used literal physical stones to basically give a message of His greatness and faithfulness. But today, in Christ the Bible says we are living stones, but our purpose is still
the same. Both our words and our actions should be clearly proclaiming the greatness and faithfulness of God. In fact listen to 1 Peter 2:9. It says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” The word “proclaim” means “to tell out” or to “proclaim abroad.” From the Greek it means “to advertise His praises.” The ones who are God’s special possession they are the ones who are to advertise and proclaim the praises of God.

Christians, if we aren’t making known the good things that God has done for us then we are failing to fulfill God’s calling and purpose for our lives. We must tell all that we know about the faithfulness and greatness of God. We must live our lives in such a way that people see something different from the rest of the scenery, like those stones that were out of place on the river bank. Then they will look at us and ask, “What do these stones mean?” or “What does this change in your life mean?” This will give us the opportunity to share about our great and faithful God.