Pentecost 14 Joshua 4:1-9
September 6, 2020 368-536-538-537

Remember Who Your God Is!
I. He is your almighty God.
II. He is your faithful Lord.

Dear Christian friends,

When I first looked at these verses I was a **bit perplexed**. WHAT did **Joshua** and the **Israelites crossing** the Jordan River have to do with **Peter confessing** Jesus to be the promised Savior? **In the gospel** reading Jesus asked Peter and the apostles, ***"Who do you say I am?"*** In this reading we **could say** God tells the Israelites, "JUST LOOK who I am!"

This week's readings say to us, "LOOK AGAIN at who your God is!" **So** let's look closer at this reading guided by this thought – "REMEMBER WHO YOUR GOD IS!" Remember that God is 1)your almighty God and 2)your faithful Lord.

I. He is your almighty God.

REMEMBER WHO your God is – **yes**, that He is your almighty God! These **Israelites** NEEDED to see and remember that. The **Israelites crossing** the Jordan River here marked the end of the **40 years** of wandering in the wilderness. During those 40 years a whole new generation of Israelites **had grown up**. The only life they knew was this **life in** the wilderness – camping here – camping there – eating manna day after day after day. **This new generation** HAD HEARD about life and slavery in Egypt from their parents and grandparents but they themselves had **not actually been** slaves in Egypt. **These new Israelites** HAD HEARD from their parents and grandparents about the 10 plagues – the crossing of the Red Sea, etc., - but **they** had not personally witnessed or experienced them.

Now they were ABOUT TO CROSS the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land of Canaan. From life in a **barren wilderness** to a land ***"flowing with milk and honey."*** From being by themselves out in the **middle of nowhere** to a land already inhabited by people who would fight them for it. It had to be **both** an EXCITING and SCARY time.

The Israelites had spent the last three days **camped** on the **eastern shore** of the Jordan River. The Jordan was at ***"flood stage"*** – swelled by the **spring rains** and **melting** mountain snows. The Jordan was raging – swirling – surging over its banks. FOR THREE DAYS they sat there looking at that river. HOW in the world would 2 million plus people – from babies to the **elderly** – with all their **animals** and **earthly possessions** safely cross that flooded river?!

Following **God's instructions** priests carrying ***"the Ark of the Covenant"*** arrived at the river's edge. Remember that ***"the Ark of the Covenant"*** pictured God dwelling among His people. It was a reminder of God's COVENANT with them and of God's PROMISE of the Savior. The people had been ordered to ***"keep a distance"*** from the ark. They were to show respect and **reverence** for God. This also allowed many more to see what was about to happen. ***"As soon as the priests carrying the ark came to the Jordan, and …their feet dipped into the edge of the water …the waters flowing down from upstream came to a standstill. The waters piled up in one heap, very far away. …The priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan … until the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan on dry ground."***

While the Israelites couldn't do **anything** about the **flooding Jordan** that river was NO OBSTACLE to God carrying out His **plans** and **promises**. What a lesson for these Israelites to SEE and REMEMBER! Their God is the ALMIGHTY God ***"with whom nothing is impossible."*** With God on their side they could cross the Jordan River – enter the Promised Land – CONFIDENT that they would win the victory and **take possession** of the land. Their **Canaanite** enemies were bigger than them but

not bigger than their **almighty** God. God wanted to MAKE SURE that the Israelites didn't forget that so He had the Israelites gather those **12 stones** from the river bed and pile them on the shore – a CONSTANT, SILENT REMINDER and **witness** – look WHAT **God did here** – remember WHO your God is!

We need to remember this too, don't we? Watch the news and it **seems as if** OUR COUNTRY and world is more and more spinning out of control – riots, Covid 19, etc. In our PERSONAL LIVES we can be dealing with problems that just don't seem to **ever get solved** – dealing with pains that never seem to **let up**. In our SPIRITUAL LIVES that never-ending battle to ***"deny"*** our sinful natures – to live **God-centered, God-pleasing** lives – we can get so worn down by that **daily grind**.

Especially then REMEMBER WHO your God is - the almighty God! Learn from this miracle and **all the other** miracles in the Bible the ALMIGHTY POWER of our God. So much of **life** is OUT OF **our control**. So many of our **problems** are TOO BIG for us to handle – but not for our **almighty** God! Let's be honest about our WEAKNESSES and our INABILITIES and then remember and rejoice that **our God** is the ALMIGHTY God. Exult with Paul, ***"If God is for us, who can be against us? In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."***

"When your children ask in the future, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in front of the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD." Remember who your God is for He is also…

II. Your faithful Lord.

Imagine being an **Israelite camped** on the eastern shore of the Jordan River. With your own eyes you can NOW SEE it. Just over on the **other side** is the Promised Land – the land God had promised so long ago to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was almost 500 years ago when God had first made that promise to Abraham. Just 38 years ago the parents and **grandparents** of this new generation of Israelites had also been at the border of the Promised Land. But instead of TRUSTING God's **almighty power** and **promises** they grumbled and **complained** about God's ways – they questioned God's **love** and **faithfulness**. In their STUBBORN UNBELIEF they forfeited the right to enter the Promised Land. God told them, "OK, have it your way. You will die out in this **barren wilderness**. Your children and grandchildren will instead enter and **settle** in the Promised Land."

So they Israelites spent **40 years wandering** in the wilderness. Their children proved they could also grumble and **complain** – doubt and **question** - God's **love** and **ways** and **promises**. But through it all God **proved** to be their FAITHFUL LORD. To quote Paul, ***"If we are faithless, He (God) remains faithful, for He cannot disown Himself. No matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ."*** It had been a BUMPY ROAD and a LONG TIME **in coming** but now the Israelites had **safely entered** the Promised Land. That pile of stones served as a SILENT WITNESS and REMINDER of God's **almighty power** AND **faithfulness**. It may have taken a MIRACLE to **get the Israelites** across the Jordan but God will do miracles JUST TO KEEP His promises.

Look at that CROSS. It's our version of those **12 stones taken** from the Jordan River and piled on the **shore**. That cross serves ***"as a sign among us"*** to our God's almighty power and FAITHFULNESS.

Look at that cross and REMEMBER WHO our God is. He is our Creator whom we are to ***"LOVE with ALL our heart, soul and mind."*** He is the holy God who will ***"not be mocked"*** or ignored. With **His 10 Commandments** God has clearly spelled out EXACTLY HOW He expects us to live our lives. God has also made clear that He will accept nothing less than PERFECT obedience. If anyone thinks they can PLAY GAMES with God just look again at all those **Israelites who died** in the wilderness. ***"God was not pleased with them,"*** Paul wrote and then added, ***"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us."***

Yet instead of stones **we look** at a CROSS. Our holy God is also ***"the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, who forgives wickedness, sin and rebellion."*** God does not excuse our sins – He ***"forgives"*** us FOR JESUS' SAKE. The **eternal Son** of God took on our human flesh and blood to take our place **under** God's law and **on** Calvary's cross. Giving us all the credit Jesus lived the life of **perfect love** and **obedience** that we owed God. Bearing the sins of the whole world ***"in His body"*** Jesus suffered and died on the cross – the innocent ***"Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."*** And it doesn't stop there! Do you want to see the GREATEST MIRACLE God ever did? Go check out Jesus' grave. It's open and **empty**. Jesus doesn't need it **anymore** because He ISN'T DEAD anymore! We have a risen, living Lord Jesus and trusting in Jesus **we have** God's forgiveness of all our sins – a whole new relationship with God – we are going straight to heaven when we die. ALL THAT just as God had **promised**! Oh WHAT A GOD we have! Oh REMEMBER who your God is and what He's ALL DONE for you and PROMISED to you!

Once the Israelites crossed the Jordan River they faced BIG ENEMIES and obstacles – they had to fight MAJOR BATTLES. But their God had promised them, ***"Don't be afraid. I am with you. I will fight for you. I will give you this land."*** Read the book of Joshua and see God FAITHFULLY KEEP His **promises**.

Israel's faithful God is ALSO OUR **faithful** God. He has also promised us, ***"Don't be afraid. I am with you. I will fight for you. I will give you the victory."*** In Christian hymns and **poetry** CROSSING THE JORDAN has become a picture of the **Christian dying and entering** the Promised Land of heaven. Death can look so FIERCE – COLD – FINAL. We can do nothing about death. But Jesus has already conquered death for us. Trusting in Jesus we now look forward to OUR PROMISED LAND – ***"the new heavens and new earth, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, where God will have wiped every tear from our eyes and made everything new."*** That's the promise of our FAITHFUL, ALMIGHTY God!

So heed the lesson of today's readings. REMEMBER WHO your God is - your almighty God – your faithful Lord. Amen.