



Sermon Title: Pursuing the Kingdom: Stepping Out

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Tell of a time when you have given a gift to someone, and for some reason it was never used.
2. Describe the 'good china, silver cutlery and linens' that you grew up with. Were they ever used? When?
3. What was a significant place in your formative years? Why?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Review the stories of Numbers 13:1-14:12 and Joshua 1:1-18; 3:1 – 4:7. Explore the 'who, what, when, where, why and how' of each. Contrast the fear, faith and obedience issues facing the two generations. What surprises you about each generation?
2. What did Joshua's call to 'consecrate yourselves' imply? (Josh 3:5) What does 'consecration' involve for us today?
3. What did the ark signify for the people? (Josh 3:3-5, 11) (Also, Ex 25:22; Nu 10:33-34) Why did God call them to look at the Ark and then command them to 'keep a distance of about a thousand yards'? (Josh 3:4b)
4. Why was it necessary for the people to 'see the ark' (Josh 3:10, 13) before they stepped out into the Jordan? (Josh 3:15, 16) How does this help us understand Luke 6:38? What is the correlation between obedience, faith and trust?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. What is easiest/hardest for you to do:
Consecrate yourself?
Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus?
Take the first step?
2. Share a time when you have had to 'step out in faith'? What happened? What is the next step that God is calling you to take... 'since you have never been this way before'? (Josh 3:4)
3. How can the Group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

Resource: Nicholas Winton story

<https://youtu.be/U5ynyADALtc>

THE WORD (NIV)

Numbers 13:1-14:12

Joshua 1:1-18; 3:1-4:7

Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. ²After three days the officers went throughout the camp, ³giving 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. ⁴Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between you and the ark; do not go near it." ⁵Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you." ⁶Joshua 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. ⁷And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses." ⁸Tell 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." ⁹Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. ¹⁰This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. ¹¹See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. ¹²Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. ¹³And 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." ¹⁴So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. ¹⁵Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, ¹⁶the 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. ¹⁷The 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.

Luke 6:38

³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."



There are few things more tragic than a gift that is never opened or used. All of us have been given an assortment of gifts from our Heavenly Father – our health, talents, spiritual gifts, money, possessions and time, etc, so that we may partner with Him to bring people back into relationship with Himself, and in accomplishing His redemptive purposes in the world. When we hold these gifts with an open hand and step out in faith our friendship and intimacy with God will go to a whole new level and others will be impacted for time and eternity. However, if we keep our gifts hidden and don't step out and use them for His purposes we will miss the fulfilling, satisfying and impactful life God intended for us to have.

We tend not to trust strangers. God's ultimate will for us is that we would be His close friend and to know and trust Him in all things. Our faith and trust in God will only come by getting to know Him better. This is done by knowing the Scriptures and through experiencing His reality and power in our lives. To accomplish this, God will often present us with an opportunity or challenge that cannot be done solely in our own strength, then call us to step out to do it while trusting Him to do what we cannot. When God comes through, our trust in God and His character is strengthened and our love and intimacy with Him goes to another level.

In Numbers 13, the children of Israel are at the very doorstep to the land God promised them. God then asked them to enter the land and possess it. They in turn sent out spies who mostly returned with a negative report. Though they had recently witnessed God do amazing miracles in Egypt and after, they caved into fear and began grumbling (Num 14). God determined that those people would not enter the land. It would wait for the next generation who would trust and follow Him. We too can miss God's purpose for us. Have you known someone or even a church that, through poor choices missed God's best for them? Where there is no faith exercised, God's work dies (Heb 11:6), and our friendship with God never really grows either. There is no tragedy like that of an unused gift or a life that just goes through the motions. Fortunately, God will not leave you alone but will keep prompting you to leave the comfort of the routine and to abandon yourself to the high adventure of following God with all your heart.

Fast forward 40 years. Joshua is now leading Israel (Joshua 1-3) and a new generation of Israelites are about to cross the Jordan River. Joshua encourages the people and tells them that if they want to see God do what they could not, there are three things they must practice. They are:

1. **God empowers those who consecrate themselves.** For the people of the day that meant performing a ritual washing. Today we need to cut out anything that gets in the way of our relationship with God and with one another, be it sin, anger, pride or unforgiveness, and dethrone the self-centered part of you that wants to take the lead.
2. **God empowers those who keep their eyes fixed on Him** (Joshua 3:3). The Ark was the embodiment of the presence of God. To keep their eyes on the Ark was to keep their eyes on the Lord. Don't focus on the circumstances but let Him guide you (Mark 12:29-31). The fear of others can discourage you from taking the risks God calls you to take. Take your focus off yourself. Seek His approval. Humility is not thinking less of yourself but simply thinking of yourself less.
3. **God empowers those who take the first step** (Joshua 3:13). The Jordan, while not an extensive river, was at flood stage and thus was wider and deeper than normal. Additionally, the crossing at Jericho was one of the most treacherous places to cross the Jordan. Yet God called them to cross there (vs 10) that they may see Him work. If you play it safe you will not see the power of God operating in your life. You must take the first step and put your foot in the water.

Where is God calling you to take the first step? Is it in seeking forgiveness with someone or in restoring relationships, or praying for someone at school or work, or inviting them to church or your community group? Is it giving of your time to serve as a group leader or at church, or be more generous with your money? There is more to life than staying on the river bank. Step out and get your feet wet. The Israelites stepped out and they crossed the Jordan. There God instructed them to build a memorial with stones (vs 24) as a visual reminder of the awesome power and faithfulness of God. The world today needs to hear that God is trustworthy but to see these convictions lived out in our lives. They will when we step out and cross our Jordan.