

The Rock: 05-01-2022

A Year with the master

Title: The Crossing

Scripture: Joshua 4:1-10 (black bible Pg. 169 ESV)

Theme:

Learning to connect all of the generations along the journey of life is what will make a healthy community.

Introduction:

This is a story of new beginnings and the crossing after 40 years of wandering in the desert.

Paradigm moments in life, moments of shifting, of transition, where we cannot (should not) desire to "go back" to where we once were.

Remembering, as we always should, that the past is good. It shows us how we got to where we are today, who we are as a people, and all the lessons learned along the way.

Realizing too, that every generation has something to bring to the table, as it were. Also, learning that within that, we

must understand that this age, this time we are in is different.

That means, some things which worked before, simply will not work any longer, and yet, some will.

We often times blame the younger generation for being a particular way, then in turn blame the older generation for being a peculiar way.

As if somehow from some perspective each generation is wrong. That is a dangerous blanket statement which makes a bunch of shallow assumptions.

Let's remember, that all of us here were young once, and all of us here will be old at some point. So, what if...

From God's perspective, we find that they are both right, both are necessary for the health and vibrancy of the Church and this community, as well as for growing forward into the next season of life.

Each generation wrestles with or has wrestled with its own set of concerns and issues. Learning to navigate the culture we are set down in, all in order to make the gospel clear to each passing generation.

I'm reminded of Paul's teaching regarding the next generation of church leaders:

-2 Timothy 2:1-2 (ESV)

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men*, who will be able to teach others also."

(-Anthropoi, means both men and women depending on its context.)

-2 Timothy 4:1-5 (ESV)

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

It's important for us to understand what Paul is getting at here. He is not saying that once you hit a particular age, God has no use for you, so make sure you keep

your people trained, so I can take a break.

As if when a person hits geezer-hood, they have nothing to offer. That is a cultural perspective that has for whatever reason infected the church.

I am convinced as well, that it is part of why we struggle to find folks to volunteer for things like nursery and kid's church. Not a guilt thing, a fact thing.

Younger folks feel, for various reason that this is a service provided to take advantage of, and older folks look at it as if it's a "been there done that, it's the next generations turn" attitude.

Both perspectives create an unhealthy community of believers, where instead, we ought to be looking at how and where we can serve at every age, most especially if we are taking advantage of programs.

I'm reminded again of my friend Dave Southwick and what he always taught, you have to be reaching up a couple steps on the ladder -to the older generation, and a couple steps down to then mentor the generation coming up.

Working together to help each other become the best individual and then in

turn the healthy community God calls us to be.

For if there are any gaps in the process, "skipping an entire generation" for example, then our community becomes unhealthy -forgetful of the things which have gone before.

All of which are necessary in order to launch forward in the healthiest way possible. God Himself, always provides the reminders, the people, the memory stones for that journey.

The Story:

Why? Because each step of the journey has its unique set of circumstances, concerns and challenges. Culture changes and shifts while the Gospel remains constant.

Learning that our anchor in any storm, the Truth of the Scriptures is what grounds us in all of the chaos, keeps us within proper perspective in a world which has its feet firmly planted in mid-air.

This is not any disrespect; it is simply a truthful observation. Without any reference point for morality and truth, we, as human beings, create our own.

When that happens, truth is anchored inside of ourselves, and then it changes,

shifts and fluctuates depending on how we feel, what our circumstances are, and our opinion. (Look at Judges) everyone did as they saw fit. There was no king, no reference point—they had forgotten...

One of the most important things about these "twelve stones" Joshua was called to set up is that of being a reminder, a reference point.

1-Of who they were

2-Of who they were becoming

3-Of who they will become

All in order that God be glorified and be the center of their truth and worship:

-Joshua 4:6-7 (ESV)

"...that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."

Discipleship and teaching the community of believers the victories, as well as the losses (mistakes) of the past.

At the same time, to remind the children that they were in fact, the children of grace and the promise of God, that they are His very own.

Why? Well, because the first go at entering the promise land was a failure which cost them 40 years.

Now, I leave it with you to look at and see, but in Numbers 13-14 where Moses sends the twelve spies into the land of Canaan to scout things out.

After 40 days of spying out the land, the spies return with their report. The Land is everything God said it would be.

But-the people that live there are big and there are a lot of them. We cannot take that place.

-Numbers 13:25-29 (ESV)

"At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities

are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."

Ten say no way. But-Caleb...

-Numbers 13:30 (ESV)

"But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."

Faith in God to fulfill through His people, what He promised He would fulfill. I am giving you this land!

This is vision-mission-action. Except they fell into the fear trap which always leads to inaction.=, and ultimately, death.

The vision of 400 years of prayer, led to freedom from slavery, as God sent them their deliverer - Moses.

The mission-Take the land I promised to give you, through Abraham. All you have to do is trust, to remember.

But you see, action was stifled because they couldn't see beyond their current

circumstances to the promise of God. When God said the land was theirs -it was a done deal.

All they needed to do was to be faithfully obedient to take action - fulfill their part of the plan.

It is the same for all of us, as individuals as well as a community of believers here as the local church.

The mission is always the same; "Go into all the world" (Matt 28:18-20). It is as simple as crossing the Jordan, but it's the challenge of the "change factor" which freezes us on the wrong shore line.

The culture changes constantly. Becoming more hostile toward the Gospel message - or worse: (as that hostility should not be a surprise)

But the culture doesn't even know the gospel. Or who Jesus is, or what the Bible is. Vision then, for us, becomes, "How do we, as disciples of Jesus engage this culture" with the unchanging mission and message of Jesus?

We go back to see how they (The Church throughout History) did it. This is not a new challenge -it just happens to be our challenge -to remember, in order that we can be faithful within our own unique set of issues.

In Joshua's time, the people of Israel needed the reminder of God's faithfulness in the journey. Why? Because what lay ahead were difficult challenges. They would need the encouragement of past victories:

-Joshua 4:19-24 (ESV)

"The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?' then you shall let your children know, Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

These people were slaves (Point #1)

Crossing the Jordan was the first step into who they were to be in the present. (Point #2) The free people of God, on mission in their world.

"I am giving you this land, that you may live in the way I command, so that the nations may know me."

-Isaiah 42:6 (ESV)

"I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations..."

Discipleship -knowing our bibles and engaging the culture around us -that is the mission of the church in the world.

Learning to be that salt and light, called to love and walk as Jesus walked.

Becoming the "people of God" in a hostile environment, for us, perhaps is a new experience. We have been blessed to live in and be citizens of this wonderful country.

But as time and culture changes, the church is being pushed to the edges of society - seen as closed minded, uncompromising and unchanging.

Cross over and take that land. An ancient challenge given to Joshua - is now given to us. It's too hard, they are too big, too mean. They hate the gospel and they think I'm crazy.

Ok- but if I'm honest, given what people are believing nowadays as truth -me believing that a dead guy lives -well that's not near as crazy and quite easy to believe.

The reminder -the 12 stones -that God's promises hold true through the ages and all challenges. That to remember where we have been and all that God has done is important, as it builds our faith for the new challenges which lay ahead.

The challenges which Church of the Rock has faced in our first 44 years have been varied. Each one met by faithful people, being led by faithful people, believing that God had put them here.

Well, here we are, still growing, still moving forward and now being challenged with new things, new cultural challenges and yet, the same old mission.

Go into the world (Point #3) Who you will eventually become. We simply don't know what the future holds, but we do know God is faithful, as He always has been.

Joshua and the people of Israel realized this, and Joshua was obedient to do what God called Him to. One of the two people who were over 40, in fact they were into their 80's by that point.

Both he and Caleb were the lone survivors of not only the desert wanderings, but the miracles God performed in Egypt. Into their the 80's now and leading the group of people, now all 40 and under.

Honor the past! Learn from the past! Listen to the Caleb's of the world, the voices (faithful) of their generation. Why? Because they have something to offer to the current as well as the future generation.

The middle group of doers, the children raised during the 40 years of wanderings, took the promised land, led by the two who believed in God's promises.

Tell your children, another generation down, to look at these stones. Not as some kind of idol, but as a reminder of God's faithfulness.

I often wonder, in God's goodness, how I got here. Many of us do, I suspect. I was young once, and knew everything, as most young people do.

Yet that does not mean that the young generation has or knows nothing. In fact, they too, (you young people) bring something to the table. This community needs every generation if we are going to be healthy and grow forward.

In talking to a friend, a couple weeks ago, we were both reminded of where we've been, where we are, (We are now our parents age), and also, where we are headed.

We've been a part of this church for the better part of 35 years, and have watched our "youth leaders" grow into the older generation -ever faithful, but transitioning for many reasons into the later seasons of life.

Here we are, middling as it were, in our 50's -some days wondering, "How did we get here." That's the beauty of long-term faithfulness in one direction and in one place.

We have had the privilege of watching the next generation rise up, join the journey, and see how God's faithfulness is working in and through them.

We need each other, and every generation together! We get to see all that God has done (memory stones), enjoy and celebrate and lead in what He is doing.

Reaching down a couple rungs on the ladder to help the next generation by reminding them and discipling them into the call that God has for them, in the things He will have them do.

Cairns -memory stones-markers commanded to be built by God -So that we may remember. So that we may be active, so that we may disciple, encourage, and train up.