

Where Do We Go From Here?

Sunday, December 31, 2017
10:30 AM

Joshua 3:1-4 (NIV)

Crossing the Jordan

3 Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. **2** After three days the officers went throughout the camp, **3** giving 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. **4** Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits[[a](#)] between you and the ark; do not go near it.”

INTRODUCTION

Joshua and the Israelites stood at the crossroads of their future. Behind them lay 40 years of wandering in the desert, a generation that had died because of their unbelief, doubt, fear, disobedience and many failures. Still there had been many mighty miracles of provision, victories in battle, supernatural manifestations of God’s powerful presence, mount Sinai and the giving of the law, deliverance, faith and trust in Jehovah God.

And now something new.... A new beginning... A new home... New challenges, new blessings, and new opportunities... And a promise that God would lead the way.

Today we stand at the crossroads of yet another new year. Much lies behind us. Victories and failures; fear and faith, doubt and trust, obedience and disobedience, strength and weakness, joy and sadness.

But now something new... A new beginning... A new YEAR... New challenges, new blessings, and new opportunities...

A way we’ve never been, simply because we are bound by the linear nature of time and cannot experience our future until it becomes our present.

No one knows for sure what 2018 will bring. We’ve never been this way before. But I invite you to trust that God will show us the way if we keep our eyes on Him.

There are several ways our text speaks to us today as we stand at the beginning of a new year

1. They camped.... A time of reflection, a time of preparation. A time of consecration and commitment to God
2. When you see.... Keeping our eyes on God, believing He has a plan for us
3. Move out.... We are going to go into the new year no matter what, but in many ways, we must chose to move forward.
4. Follow.... Obedience to the direction of God

There is a passage in Jeremiah that elaborates on this crossroads in our life

Jeremiah 6:16-17 (NIV)

16 This is what the Lord says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ **17** I appointed watchmen over you and said, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But you said, ‘We will not listen.’

1. Stand... stop for a minute and consider what you are going to do
2. Look... we can see if we will just open our eyes to the truths that God wants to show us
3. Ask for the ancient paths.... Proven principles, tried and true ways that God has given us that bring blessing into our lives

Speaking of ancient paths... It seems like many people today don't even have much common sense let alone tried and true wisdom from the past. A few examples...

ONE

Recently, I went to McDonald's and I saw on the menu that you could have an order of 6, 9 or 12 Chicken Mc Nuggets.

I asked for a half dozen nuggets.

'We don't have half dozen nuggets,' said the teenager at the counter.

'You don't?' I replied.

'We only have six, nine, or twelve,' was the reply.

'So I can't order a half dozen nuggets, but I can order six?'

'That's right.'

So I shook my head and ordered six Mc Nuggets

(Unbelievable but sadly true...)

(Must have been the same one I asked for sweetener and she said they didn't have any, only Splenda and sugar.)

(And they think they are worth \$15.00 per hour)

TWO

I was checking out at the local Wal-Mart with just a few items and the lady behind me put her things on the belt close to mine. I picked up one of those dividers that they keep by the cash register and placed it between our things so they wouldn't get mixed. After the girl had scanned all of my items, she picked up the divider, looking it all over for the bar code so she could scan it.

Not finding the bar code, she said to me, 'Do you know how much this is?'

I said to her 'I've changed my mind; I don't think I'll buy that today.'

She said 'OK,' and I paid her for the things and left.

She had no clue to what had just happened.

(But the lady behind me had a big smirk on her face as I left)

THREE

A woman at work was seen putting a credit card into her DVD drive and pulling it out very quickly.

When I inquired as to what she was doing, she said she was shopping on the Internet and they kept asking for a credit card number, so she was using the ATM thingy.

(Keep shuddering!!)

FOUR

I recently saw a distraught young lady weeping beside her car.

'Do you need some help?' I asked.

She replied, 'I knew I should have replaced the battery to this remote door un-locker. Now I can't get into my car. Do you think they (pointing to a distant convenience store) would have a battery to fit this?'

Hmm, I don't know. Do you have an alarm, too?' I asked.

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No, just this remote thingy,' she answered, handing it and the car keys to me.

As I took the key and manually unlocked the door, I replied, 'Why don't you drive over there and check about the batteries. It's a long walk....'

PLEASE just lie down before you hurt yourself!!!

FIVE

Several years ago, we had an Intern who was none too swift.

One day she was typing and turned to a secretary and said, 'I'm almost out of typing paper. What do I do?'

'Just use paper from the photocopier', the secretary told her.

With that, the intern took her last remaining blank piece of paper, put it on the photocopier and proceeded to make five blank copies.

A Brunette, by the way!!

SIX

A mother calls 911 very worried asking the dispatcher if she needs to take her kid to the emergency room, the kid had eaten ants.

The dispatcher tells her to give the kid some Benadryl and he should be fine, the mother says, 'I just gave him some ant killer.....'

Dispatcher: 'Rush him in to emergency right now!'

Life is tough. It's even tougher if you're stupid!!!!

4. Ask for the good way... as opposed to the bad. Good in the sense of what they bring to our lives - peace and rest for our souls

What are some of these proven pathways that will help us navigate this new year?

- God is on the throne and is in control... Trust Him with all you heart and He will direct your paths

Psalm 121 (NIV)

A song of ascents.

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? **2** My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. **3** He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; **4** indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. **5** The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; **6** the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. **7** The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; **8** the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

*Psalms 120 – 134 are unified as a subcollection of the Psalter by the common title “**A song of ascents.**” The background to this title has several interpretations. The Hebrew word translated “ascents” is related to the verb “to go up.” Since the Jerusalem temple is geographically situated on a hilltop in the south-central mountain region of Israel, going to Jerusalem involved an “ascent.” In [Ezr 7:9](#), Ezra refers to his “journey” from Babylon to Jerusalem using this Hebrew word (using the verb in [Ezr 2:1](#)), so one interpretation is that this term recalls the **return of captives from exile in Babylon**. Perhaps the most common view is that **pilgrims on their journey to Jerusalem for one of the three annual agricultural festivals sang these songs in anticipation of the festivities** ([Ex 23:14 – 17](#); [34:18 – 24](#); [Lev 23:4 – 44](#); [Dt 16:1 – 17](#)). The imagery of [Ps 126:5 – 6](#); [127:2](#); [128:2](#); [129:6 – 8](#); [132:15](#) might allude to agricultural harvests.*

*The Hebrew word translated “ascents” can mean “steps” and was used by Ezekiel to refer to the **temple staircase** ([Eze 40:22,31](#)). Later Jewish tradition suggests that these 15 songs were sung by Levites at the Festival of Tabernacles as they stood on each of the **15 steps leading to the main court of the second temple**. This latter interpretation does not exclude a possible early use of these songs during pilgrimages to the annual festivals. Assuming that these psalms were used in conjunction with the great pilgrim festivals, they express a strong longing in anticipation of worship in Jerusalem. The heartfelt love for worship at God’s temple is similar in spirit to the words of an Egyptian text practiced by scribes expressing their deep desire to see the holy city of the god Ptah in Memphis. ♦*

[121:3](#) The Hebrew word for keeps (preserves) is used six times in this song, dramatically emphasizing the care of God (see [Jude 24](#)).

What a comfort this psalm brings to our hearts. It reminds us that no matter what, God is in control. He is watching over us, preserving us and giving us the strength to make it through

Whether our fear is...

"I am no match for the difficulty" or

"I won't make it" or

"I am vulnerable and unprotected"

We are assured that no matter the circumstances this new year may bring, God is in control and will direct our paths

The potential disasters on the pilgrim climb to Zion are: the difficulty of the ascent itself (v. 1), a slip or fall (v. 3) and exposure (v. 6). Lest any danger be omitted, the psalm closes with a promise the Lord will keep you from all harm (v. 7) at all times (v. 8). - Wood, George O.. A Psalm in Your Heart

Two more scriptures that outline this path are as follows

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

6 in all your ways (acknowledge) submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (direct your paths)

Proverbs 3:5-6 (ERV)

5 Trust the Lord completely, and don't depend on your own knowledge. **6** With every step you take, think about what he wants, and he will help you go the right way.

AND

Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

- The devil is still at work... Resist him and he will flee from you

A recent text we examined in The Book of Revelation reminds us

Revelation 12:12-17 (NIV)

12 ...But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

17 ...and went off to wage war {with}—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

And in 1 Peter we are told

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

His time on this earth is no yet finished and we can be assured that as we walk the pathway of this new year we will encounter his attacks. But our advantage is that God has given us forewarning of his plot against us. We can be prepared.

There is a great quote in the second Hobbit Movie in which Gandalf says...

“We’ve been blind, and in our blindness our enemy has returned” Let us not be blind to the existence and plans of our enemy – The devil.

James 4:7 (NIV)

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Temptation will come our way but God has given us a way of escape

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

God has shown us the pathway to avoid the pitfalls the devil has prepared for us but we must walk in it. God's accusation to the people of Israel through the Prophet Jeremiah was that they refused to walk in the good pathways. They refused to listen to the trumpets of the Watchmen that God had appointed over them to sound the alarm of warning that he enemy was near

- Our days are numbered... Some of us may not be here next year

I believe one of the realizations that help us navigate the course of a new year is remembering that our days are numbered.

James 4:14 (NIV)

14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

The reality of life is that it is fragile and short. Not a year goes by that we don't lose someone close to our hearts. Sometimes in the natural course of life and death and sometimes in great and unexpected tragedy.

Psalm 90:12 (NIV)

12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

The point is to live in such a way that we make the most of every day both in the way we approach life for our own sakes and in the way we treat others. Love what you have while you have it, for soon it may be gone.

- The Word of God is necessary food and brings nourishment to our souls

Job declared...

Job 23:12 (NIV)

12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread (necessary food).

When I think of daily bread I think of the manna from heaven that God provided for the Israelites every morning of their sojourn in the desert. Without it they would have starved. And yet, though God provided it, their sustenance depended also upon their willingness to go out and gather what had been provided.

Likewise, God has given us His word that we might be sustained, but it is up to us to read it, digesting it's nutrients on a daily basis. What is your plan for reading and studying His Word this year?

Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Pastor Richard Blackaby says, *“If Jesus could speak and raise the dead, calm a storm, cast out demons, and heal the incurable, then what effect might a word from Him have upon your life? The possibilities should cause you to tremble!*

Guideposts,. Mornings with Jesus 2017: Daily Encouragement for your Soul (p. 369). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.