

**Crossing the Jordan**  
**Joshua 3:1-17**  
**Sermon Outline**

**Introduction:** Why is life so full of difficult river crossings? How do we face them?

**I) Life is full of waters we cannot cross over**

**A) The Jordan River at harvest time was such an expanse**

Twice 2000 cubits (3000 feet) across--v. 4

Three days by the river—v. 2

The people were ready for the Lord to *do wonders*—v. 5

**B) Meaning of the Jordan for Israel and us**

1) A hugely significant obstacle—not just a big one

2) Rivers in our lives that are more than annoying

3) Why did God preserve this story for us—especially the first part?

*In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world (John 16:33  
We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us...  
For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison  
(2 Corinthians 4:7, 17).*

**II) Why does God do things this way?**

**A) He wants us to trust him**

*v. 9-10: ...Come here and listen...: 'Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out the Canaanites...Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan*

1) Knowing beyond doubt...

2) God's way of dealing with our souls' default settings

3) Vivid declaration the God alone lives

*v. 13: When the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark...shall rest in the waters, the waters shall be cut off*

**B) How can we know what Israel knew so long ago?**

Because God as acted even more dramatically through Jesus

*When cockle shells turn silver bells/ Then shall my love come back to me.*

*When roses bloom in winter's gloom/ Then shall my love return to me.*

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming...Amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night*

**Take Away:** Pray and look for little crossings

## Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Life is full of rivers we cannot cross. An Irish ballad sings of failed love:

*The water is wide, I cannot get o'er/ Neither have I wings to fly  
Give me a boat that can carry two/ And both shall row, my love and I*

*I leaned my back against an oak/ Thinking it was a trusty tree  
But first it bent and then it broke/ So did my love prove false to me*

*Oh love be handsome and love be kind/ Gay as a jewel when first it is new  
But love grows old and waxes cold/ And fades away like the morning dew*

What un-crossable rivers do people face? What have you faced? What makes them un-crossable?

- 2) The Jordan when Israel crossed it was at flood stage—which means it was probably more than a mile across, turbulent and easily 10-20 feet deep in many places. God had them camp for three days by the banks of the river before he acted. What thoughts would have run through your mind if you were an Israelite during that three day wait?
- 3) Why was crossing the Jordan so significant to Israel? What was at stake?
- 4) Reflect on the following: “God preserved Joshua 3 for us not simply to convince us that in due time he will bring us over. He also gave it to us to remind us that we are not yet completely over. We in our experience are always somewhere between v. 2 and v. 17.” Why is it important to know this?
- 5) Some of the deepest spiritual music that has arisen in America came from slaves, and they often sang about the Jordan. Reflect on the following lyrics in the light of your experience:

*Deep river. My home is over Jordan.  
Deep river, Lord.  
I want to cross over into camp ground.*

*Get away Jordan (I want you to get away!) Get away Jordan  
Get away Jordan. I wanna cross over and see my Lord.*

- 6) Joshua 3:9-11 is in many ways the heart of the chapter. Read it over carefully and paraphrase it. According to these verses, what is God’s purpose in the events described?
- 7) Reflect on the following: “People often wonder why God sets before us rivers that we cannot cross. Part of the answer is this: We will not know, or we will forget, that God alone is the ‘living God’ (v 10), unless from time to time he confronts us with something that is obviously beyond us (everything is beyond us, of course, but not all things are obviously beyond us).”
- 8) At the crossing of the Jordan, God acted into the ‘real world’ in order to make vivid that he is real (not just an idea we have made up to create meaning and hope for ourselves) and that he loves us. He acted even more dramatically in Jesus—not as an ark, but as a man. In Jesus he did more than block the waters to save us: he allowed them to drown him. Reflect on Psalm 115:4-7 and Psalm 69:1-4 and then spend some time praying with thanks.