

Sermon Title: The Weight of Remembrance

Main Scripture: Joshua 4:1-9, 20-24

## 1. Introduction: The Era of Digital Amnesia

We live in an age designed to make us forget. Think about how we handle our memories today. In the past, people printed photos, framed them, and hung them on walls where they had to look at them every day.

Today, we take thousands of digital photos that instantly disappear into cloud storage, buried deep in our phone archives.

Our modern culture defaults to burying things to keep life fast, light, and comfortable.

But true remembrance is not light. It takes work. This Memorial Day weekend, our nation stops to remember a heavy debt—the lives of over one million men and women who died in service to our country.

But as the Church, we must understand that remembrance is not just a civic duty; it is a foundational spiritual discipline.

I want to take you to the book of Joshua, and let's read about a specific time of remembrance in the Bible. God's people had just crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, entering the Promised Land. But before they could unpack or celebrate, God stopped them to do some heavy lifting.

Let's look at Joshua 4:1-7:

*“When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Choose twelve men from among the*

*people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.’ So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites... and said to them, ‘Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder... to serve as a sign among you.’”*

I want to draw your attention to three points this morning:

## **2. Point 1: Remembrance Requires Carrying Heavy Things**

Notice that God didn't ask Israel to just "think about" what He did.

He commanded twelve men to physically hoist heavy, dripping wet rocks from the muddy bottom of the riverbed and carry them on their shoulders.

The Earthly Parallel:

Remembrance is uncomfortable. On Memorial Day, it forces us to look directly at the heavy, muddy reality of war, loss, and broken families.

It is much easier to just enjoy a three-day weekend, fire up the grill, and ignore the cost. But we are called to carry the heavy, uncomfortable truth that our current safety was bought with someone else's tomorrow.

The Spiritual Significance:

This requirement for heavy remembrance mirrors a profound spiritual reality in our daily Christian walk. In Luke 22:19, during the Last Supper, Jesus broke bread and said:

*19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

Just like the stones in Joshua, the communion table is a heavy monument. When we remember Christ, we cannot just skip to the joy of the empty tomb; we must first pull the heavy stone of Calvary onto our shoulders.

True spiritual remembrance means sitting with the staggering weight of our sin and the brutal cost Jesus paid to deliver us.

**True grace is free, but it was not cheap.**

### **3. Point 2: Memorials are Built to Fight Generational Drift**

God knew that human beings are prone to spiritual amnesia. The generation that walked across the dry riverbed would eventually pass away. Let's read why God wanted these heavy stones piled up.

Look at Joshua 4:6-7:

*"In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord... These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."*

The Earthly Parallel:

Memorial Day monuments are not actually for the fallen—

The stones are for us and our children. They serve as a visual roadblock to our comfort, demanding that the next generation stops and asks, "Why do we honor these names?" **When a society stops asking what the stones mean, gratitude dies. And when gratitude dies, entitlement takes its place.**

The Spiritual Significance:

Scripture warns us that the exact same drift happens in our faith when we stop actively teaching the next generation about God's deliverance. Let's look at a tragic turning point in Judges 2:10:

*"After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel."*

How does an entire generation completely forget God? It happens when parents stop carrying the stones. It happens when we fail to tell our children the raw, honest stories of how God rescued us from our own addictions, our own despair, and our own sins. If we do not honestly show our children the "memorial stones" of God's faithfulness in our lives, they will grow up entitled, assuming their spiritual inheritance required no sacrifice at all.

#### **4. Point 3: The Ultimate Monument is Engraved in Scars**

We see that Joshua did exactly what God commanded. He set up the stones so that the world would know God's power. Let's read how the story concludes in Joshua 4:21-24:

*21 He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 22 tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ 23 For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea[a] when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. 24 He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.”*

The ultimate purpose of any memorial is to point to a permanent truth. The stones of Gilgal pointed to God's power over the river.

The Earthly Parallel:

The white headstones at Arlington National Cemetery point to a permanent truth: that human beings are capable of laying down their lives for the sake of their neighbors. It points to a reflection of the greatest love possible on earth.

The Spiritual Significance:

But earth's monuments eventually crumble. The ultimate, permanent monument of deliverance is not made of stone—it is engraved in the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. Let's read what happened when the disciple Thomas doubted the resurrection in John 20:26-27:

*26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see*

*my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”*

Have you ever wondered why Jesus kept His scars? He had a glorified, resurrected body. He could have healed His skin perfectly. But He chose to keep the holes in His hands and the gash in His side. Why?

Because those scars are God's eternal memorial stones. Every time we look to Christ, those scars demand that we remember our ultimate rescue. They are the permanent, physical proof that our eternal captivity has been broken forever.

## **5. Conclusion: Bringing the Stones Home**

Church, let's not live with amnesia. Don't drop the stones. Let's do the hard, heavy work of remembering. Let's thank God for the brave men and women who carried the weight of earthly sacrifice for our freedoms.

But even more, let us carry the spiritual weight of the cross in our hearts every single day. Let the cost of your freedom—both earthly and eternal—change the way you live, the way you love, and the way you worship. Sometimes the past hurts, but that hurt is the stone you carry but for a minute, to be a reminder of the mighty God we serve.