

Series: Joshua
When God Makes a Way

Joshua 3:14-17

Sermon by Men's Minister Josh Brage
 Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, August 9, 2026

A reading from Joshua 3:14-17: "So, when the people broke camp across the Jordan, the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. Now 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, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarathan, 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. The 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." The word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Josh: Thank you, Mike. Thank you very much, and good morning. If I have not had a chance to meet you, my name is Josh. I am so excited to be here today. Paul is getting the weekend off, which is so good. So, one quick announcement as we end summer and look towards the fall. Wednesday at Waterstone is back. Who is excited for that? That is right. If you do not know about Wednesday at Waterstone, it is a program that we do. It is an annual thing now to kick the fall off, and we all come together on a Wednesday evening, and we have dinner together. It is usually pizza. We have pizza together out here in the hub, and then we all go to different classes. We have everything. We have things for everybody from zero to a hundred years old. We have space for you, so your kids are taken care of, and this year we are offering three different classes. So, making sense of revelation should be super fun. Paul will be in that one. I will be in that one, as well as Meaningful Evangelism, which should be a super fun class from Michael Wu, and Hope for the Journey, a parent support group, so you can learn more about those classes. We would very much encourage you to sign up and join us this fall. It is a really, really fun rhythm. It is a great place to meet people, get into the community life here at Waterstone. So learn more at waterstonechurch.org/Wednesdays, or in the app. There's an app. We have an app for that. It is called the Waterstone app.

All right, good morning. My name is Josh, as I mentioned, and I am so excited to preach out of the book of Joshua. Do you know the feeling at the end of a really, really good day? Have you ever had this feeling? Maybe you worked really hard. Maybe you did a bunch of yard work, or maybe at the office you shipped a really important project, and you get home, and dinner was great too. Maybe it was fajita night, and it was a great night, and then magically, the kids just put themselves to bed. No fighting, no fussing. They just drift off to bed, and for some reason, the house is tidy and clean, and it is quiet, and you are sitting there maybe with your wife and everything at this moment is okay. There are no more notifications going off. There are no more worries for the day. In this moment, you are okay. Everything is okay. Have you ever had this moment? Hopefully we will get more of them.

Today, the Israelites, the people who have been stuck in slavery for generations, get to experience this feeling, this feeling of being okay. Today, they get to enter into the promised land. It is a very thrilling

day. Remember, this story starts seven hundred years before this moment. We are in Joshua 3 and 4 today. Seven hundred years ago, Yahweh, God, shows up and chooses a random nomad out of nowhere and says to him, “I am going to give you a giant family. You are going to become a legacy of blessing, and I am going to give you a land.” That was seven hundred years ago, and a lot has happened since then, but the one thing that has not happened is the land. Since the promise, these people, this people group, have lived in a constant state of uncertainty, wandering around. They were enslaved in Egypt. They were becoming a family. They have now been stuck in the wilderness, wondering why their lives do not match up to everything they were promised all that time ago, but today that changes. Today the people are delivered into the promised land, and the promised land is about so much more than real estate.

The promised land is described as this place that is flowing with milk and honey. It is a place of abundance. It is a place where the land is rich, where generation after generation are going to have enough to eat. The promised land is pictured as this place where the fighting is over, where enemies are defeated, and where peace reigns forever. I want to go to there. I want to be in a land where everything is okay. I think we all do, but here is the trick for us in 2026. We are not there yet. Have you noticed? Have you noticed that in today’s age, marriages fall apart all the time? Our kids get sick or lose their way. Cancer somehow creeps into our life. Addiction breaks goodness all the time. We are so far away from the promised land, it feels like. So, the question for us today is “How do we get there?” We know we want to get there. We feel it. We feel this sense of uncertainty. We feel this sense of frustration. We feel this ache in our souls that tell us that something better is out there. That frustration that we feel is not weakness. It is not fear. It is remembering that we were built for another world. How do we get there? How do we get from here to there? That is the message of today. The question is, “How do we get from here to there, and can we even get there?” So, we are going to look at Joshua and the Israelites crossing of the Jordan today, and as we watch their stories, I want us to pay attention, because I think this story points us exactly to our own promised land. Are you with me?

All right, let’s go. Joshua chapter 3, verses 14 through 17. So today is the big day. All this buildup, all this hubbub, Moses has passed away, and Joshua is now in charge. Today is the big day, but before they cross, everybody needs to get organized, so Joshua runs around the camp first thing in the morning. We all go on vacation. We have that one family member who has a clipboard, right? Yeah, we all have that family member. This is Joshua at this moment. He runs around and gives people their instructions. “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the priest carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before, but keep a distance of about 2,000 cubits between you and the ark. Do not go near it.” Joshua is a really good leader here. He knows that this day is full of excitement and anticipation and uncertainty. They have not been this way before. They have been a wandering people, and today they get to inherit, inhabit, they get to cross over, and so he gives them very practical instructions. I’m going to summarize them for you. “Follow the ark and create space for God to move.” He says, “Follow the ark.” The ark is the representation of the presence of God on the earth, and he says “Do not get too close to it. Certainly, do not run ahead of it.” Joshua’s instructions for the people when they are facing uncertainty is “Follow the ark and create space for God to move.”

Notice what he does not say. He does not say, “You are now on Team A, and you are on Team B, and here are your plans for the day. Let’s get to work.” He does not say, “Here is the great blueprint for everything we are about to do. He does not roll out a plan of activity. I actually think that is what we do. I think when we are faced with uncertainty, we have a tendency, an instinct to get busy. Is anybody else like that? I am like that. When I am faced with an uncertain problem, I want to get to work. I want to create a plan. I want to create a strategy. I want to force something to happen in my own strength. How is that going for you? I’ll tell you how it goes for me. Terribly wrong all the time. I am excited. I am a Plan A guy. I am a go first guy. There is no Plan B. We go, I make mistakes, and I cause destruction all the time. When I try to force things to happen out of my own strength, I make a mess of things. I have a plan, I have a dream, but I need other people to come along with me, and I try to force it. I try to push it, and I make mistakes. I actually cause a mess sometimes. You would think I would learn. This is actually a major point of the entire book of Joshua. When the people take things into their own hands, when they try to do things out of their own strength, out of their own passion and ambition, things go wrong. They fail, and they fail hard, but when the people of God trust God, He moves for them in magnificent and miraculous ways. This is a theme running through the book of Joshua. Read chapters 5 and 6 and 7.

So, what about you? When you face uncertainty, is your instinct to get busy or to trust in God? Are you waiting, creating space, or are you pushing? Are you rushing? Are you trying to take things into your own hands? That is step number one, following the instructions. Follow the ark, and make space for God to move, but entering the promised land is going to require more than trust. The first thing they face is uncertainty, and then the next thing they face is found in verses 14 and 15.” So, when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark,” or following the ark, “went ahead of them.” Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest, so the first thing that people faced was this sort of sense of uncertainty. We do not know the way to go. The second thing they face is a giant problem. They face a giant barrier between everything God has promised them and where they currently are. They face a giant flooding, rushing river. That is a problem. Sometimes it seems like there are massive barriers in between us and what God has called us to, or between us and what God wants for us, and nobody is quite sure what is going to happen.

Remember this is the new generation. If you are familiar with some of the Bible stories, the generation of Moses has passed away. The generation that saw Moses command down the plagues and stand up to Pharaoh and stand at the Red Sea and split it wide open with his staff, that race, that generation died in the wilderness. This generation that is standing here in Joshua 3 has only heard the stories. They have only heard the stories about what God once did for them back then. Stories are great. They’re amazing stories. They are true stories in this case, but they are still somebody else’s story, and I do not think it is all that hard to imagine this new generation thinking to themselves, “Is God going to do anything for us?” I wonder. I can picture that. They have heard the stories, but is God going to move now, and I think this is really important for a church like ours to remember. I think it is really important to remember that this next generation is hungry. Ben used the word this morning as he was leading us in worship. They are hungry, but they are not hungry for our old stories. Sometimes those are helpful. Sometimes they are useful, but what they are hungry for is for them and their generation to encounter the power of the living God for themselves. I think we’re all hungry for that, right? We don’t want to live on our parents’ faith or

certainly our grandparents' faith. We want to experience the power of God in our lives, in our moment. I think this next generation, as the priests approach the river, were asking themselves, "Is God still going to move? What is He going to do? Is He going to show up for us now?"

Have you felt like that? I think we all have, and here is what happens. Verse 15: "Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan, and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. They piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam." The second the priests' toes hit the water, this river, this violent rushing barrier comes to a complete stop, like somebody pulling the emergency brake on a runaway train. This water piles up. God splits the Jordan River. He answers all of the questions of the next generation. The people wondering, "Is God going to move? How is He going to move? Is He going to actually deliver on hundreds of years of promises?" and in one second, God stops the river, creates dry ground, and everyone passes safely across. God's answer for the people in Joshua 3, of all of their questions, his answer for them is an unmistakable, water splitting, can't explain it any other way, miracle. That is his answer for the next generation. It is, "Look at what I am doing. What I did for them, I am doing again. What I did for them, I am doing this time. What I did back then, I am still doing today." That is his answer to all of our questions and all of our longings.

Today was the day that God taught the people that God keeps his promises, and He always makes a way. God keeps His promises, and He always makes the way. That is what He shows them. Hundreds of years of waiting, forty years in the wilderness, all of this coming together in this moment, and what does God do? He makes a way, and here they are standing now on the other side of the Jordan with clean sandals. Why? Because they are so special? Because they did everything right? Because they had the great plan? Because they had the best strategy? No. They are standing on the other side. They are standing now in their promised land because God said He would deliver them, and God keeps his promises, and God makes a way. Are we listening? Are we hearing? Students, they are not here today. I think they are upstairs. They will be here later. Students, young adults, anyone who considers themselves young, are we listening? We know the stories. We all know the songs. We have the language built into us. I was a good, home-schooled church boy. I know the stories, but there is still something in me, certainly when I was younger, that wondered if any of that would ever matter to me in my real life.

Here is the word today. Our God does not fail. Our God does not fail. He does not go back on his word. He does not forget his promises. He always comes through. He is always there when we need Him. He always delivers. That's the message he taught them, and I think it is the message he's teaching us today. Maybe you are not young. Maybe you are still wondering about some of that today. Maybe somewhere along the line you found Christ, and things have been going okay, but I am noticing the older I get, things get a little bit harder sometimes, not always easier. Maybe you have questions swirling in your life about your health, your relationships, your family, your future. Will God do for us what He did for them? You're still wondering, "Will God show up in my life? Does God still care about me? Will He see me?" and God's answer today for the people of Israel is yes. Our God keeps His promises, and He always makes a way.

So, what a great story. What an incredible miracle. God moves in a miraculous way for a new generation and a new moment. What a great story. God delivers them out of Egypt into the wilderness, through the wilderness, into their promised land, and everybody lives happily ever after, right? Some people are chuckling, because maybe they've read the Old Testament just a little bit, but this moment in

the promised land lasts for, I don't know, less than an entire book of the Bible. This moment immediately falls apart. This peace that they were promised, this inheritance that they were given immediately falls apart. They forget all the things that God does for them. They take things into their own hands. They drift away, and eventually, as the story progresses, eventually the people of God are once again hauled out of the promised land into exile and slavery. In a nutshell that is the trajectory of the entire Old Testament. God saves and leads us through and delivers us into the promised land, but then we fail, so what does that tell us? Here is what it tells us. It tells us that the promised land was never the goal. It actually shows us that the promised land was pointing us to something else. The promised land is pointing us to something bigger, something better, and something more real for us in 2026. Let's go there. Let's go there together. I still think we all have those questions of how are we going to get there? It is obvious that there is a good place, and there is a place that we are, so how are we going to get there?

Turn with me to the gospel of John chapter 14, if you have your Bibles. This conversation is happening. It is John 14, and there are a few chapters, but Jesus has an extended conversation with his disciples on the last night of his life. He sits and has dinner with them, and they have this long conversation, when somewhere along the way Jesus starts talking about a place. Look at this: "You know the way to the place where I am going." Jesus starts talking about location, and this confuses the disciples. I do not know how you spend three years with Jesus and they are still so confused, but they are constantly confused. What is Jesus talking about? Is He talking about Nazareth? Is He talking about Bethlehem? Is He talking about Mary and Martha's place, where we raised Lazarus? What is He talking about? What is this place?

He is talking about the place that He has talked about his entire life. He is talking about the place that He is about to go to, where the hungry are fed. He is talking about the place where the lepers are made clean and where the lame walk. He is talking about a place where everyone is fed, and there are plenty of leftovers for everybody. He is talking about a place where the widow and the barren have healthy, robust, big families. He is talking about a place where the foreigner and the forgotten and the sinner are forgiven and welcomed. He is talking about a place. He is talking about his entire ministry. He is talking about this place where every tear will be wiped away, and everyone will be made whole. He is talking about the promised land. He is talking about Eden. Does this sound familiar? He is talking about this place. He calls it the kingdom of heaven. That is the language He uses. He talks about the kingdom nonstop. From the very first sentence of his ministry, his mission statement is to proclaim the kingdom. Till the very end of his life, He is talking about this place that He is taking us to.

Thomas follows up and asks the question that we are all asking, verse 5: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. So how can we know the way?" We don't know where that is. Jesus, you have been talking about it. We are still a little bit confused. It does not look like our normal life. How do we know the way? Thomas voices something here that I think we all voice. It is very clear to Thomas that we are not there yet. We are here, so how do we get from here to there? We do not know the way, and one of the big reasons that we can't find the way is because there is a barrier. Not just uncertainty, but there is a barrier between us and everything God has for us, and it is the violent, chaotic rushing river of sin. Sin cascades down through humanity. It wrecks and misshapes everything it touches. It pours through our hearts. It ruins our motives. It warps our brains. It hurts our bodies. Sin destroys and seeks to destroy everything it can possibly find. It tears people apart. This river of sin separates us from everything God

has planned for us. It tears us apart, and not only does it tear us apart, but also does it disorient us. It is confusing. It leaves us swirling in a river of confusion, of uncertainty, and we try to get across.

We try to get across, don't we? We try to make our own way. We try a new thing. We try a new initiative. We try self-control. We try a new diet. We try self-improvement. We try anything we can to cross that river of sin ourselves, but the current is so strong, and the river is so wide that we can't do it. I am hearing Joshua's instructions again: "Follow the ark." The river of sin is in between us and everything God has for us. No matter how hard we try, we can't make it across. Verse 6, Jesus replies, "I am the way." He does not say, "I am going to show you the way." He does not say, "Here is a MapQuest printout of the way there." He does not give that to us. He says, "I am the way." It turns out the way to everything God has for us is not a way, it is a person, and this person's name is Jesus. Jesus is the way. Jesus is the new Joshua. Jesus is the ark, the place where the presence of God lives and exists and moves on this Earth. Jesus Christ himself is the one who enters the river. Jesus is the way. Jesus enters the river of sin Himself.

On the cross Jesus dives into the river of sin, and on the cross He takes everything sin has to offer, all of this cascading terribleness. He takes onto Himself everything that has stood between us and Him. He takes it onto Himself. He absorbs it onto Himself. He gets swept away under it. He actually goes down under it to death itself. He takes the weight of sin into his person, onto his body, and when He breathes his last, it is not a river that is split. It is a veil that is torn in two. Jesus' death breaks the separation between us and Him. The presence of God was restrained briefly, but Jesus punctures that river and makes a way for his presence, his goodness, his life, his mercy to get to us. On the cross, Jesus makes a way, and on the third day, He rises again from the grave. Amen?

Jesus is the way. The same way God delivered the new generation of Israelites, this time He delivers the world. He delivers each and every one of us, each and every one of us who has wondered if God is still moving, wonders if God has anything to do with my life, wonders if there is a life full of purpose and identity and hope. Jesus makes a way for us to enter the promised land. Jesus is the way. One thing He is not is the way to everything you want in this life. If you follow Jesus for a while, you know that that is true. He is not a way to a happy, wealthy, life. No, actually, later in that conversation with his disciples, Jesus says this, "In this world, you are going to have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world." The way is open for us to get to everything God has for us in this life or the next.

This is the story that each generation gets to participate in. You and I do not get saved because of a story out of the Jordan River. We get saved because of the story of Jesus dying on the cross, and this is the story that we get to participate in. The question now for us as we start to wrap up is, "Are we going to share that story with other people?" and Joshua actually gives us a model for this. Let's turn back to Joshua chapter 4. In Joshua chapter 4, here is the verse: "Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones. They had taken these stones out of the river, and he said to the Israelites, 'In the future, when your descendants ask their parents, "What do these stones mean?" Tell them, "Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground."'" To celebrate this amazing miracle and to ensure and to help the people of God live faithfully in this next moment, Joshua creates something to stimulate curiosity and facilitate storytelling. He builds this memorial. He builds something that would cause the question, "What is this, and why is this here?" He creates a model that is the expectation of the Old Testament, which is when God does big things in our life, we pass those along to the next generation. The model for sharing our faith is storytelling. I think storytelling is really

hard, and I am somebody who does something like this.? Storytelling is hard. Who has trouble with that, especially between generations?

Have you ever felt this way? Do you ever go to have a conversation, and there are some older people and some younger people, and it just feels like they are not always on the same wavelength. Sometimes the older folks feel a little neglected or ignored, devalued. The younger people feel preached at or talked to. Have you ever seen this happen? Does this happen in your own family sometimes? Inter-generational storytelling is difficult, but it is the model that Joshua gives us here for sharing our faith with the next generation. So, what causes this breakdown? What causes this frustration between generational storytelling? I think this is the main reason. We tell the wrong stories. I think we have a tendency to tell success stories, stories where we win, stories where we come out on top, stories when everything works out. Or we tell old stories; “Remember back then, and I got saved that one time, and everything has been great ever since,” right? Is it? Or sometimes we have a tendency not to tell stories at all. We jump right to opinion. We just call it wisdom. Here is what I would do if I were in your situation. I would know what to do, right? None of these are helpful stories for the next generation. Here is what I want to encourage us to do. I think Joshua is encouraging us to do this today.

We need to tell better stories, the best stories. You want to hear the better ones. If the worst stories are our own success or our own accomplishments, or our own wisdom, then what are the best stories? The best stories tend to come from the seasons of life we would rather not talk about. The best stories tend to come from seasons of life when we were at our worst or our weakest. The best stories that we can share with this next generation are the moments when we could not figure it out or we could not find our way, the moment when we were staring out the hospital window, defeated, doubting, and God made a way. Do you have those stories? Do you have the stories that we must tell, the stories where God is the hero, the stories where his grace is sufficient, his strength is made perfect, not in our strength, in our weakness? Do you have stories that you can tell where we decrease, so that He may increase? I think if we want God to move in our children’s lives, in the next generation’s lives, if we want the thing that God has given us here to continue forward, we have got to tell better stories.

Here is the template to use. I am not a magic storyteller, but here is the template: “I was this, but God showed me his grace, and now this.” My challenge for us this week is to find someone. Find someone to initiate a real conversation with. This could be your kids tonight at dinner. This could be a neighbor in the garage later this week. Find one conversation to have this week, and lean in. Start that conversation with curiosity. Ask them their story. Ask them what they are going through. Ask them what they are feeling and thinking. Listen, and when prompted by the Spirit, share one story, one story where God made a way, where there seemed to be no way. I think this is the expectation Joshua gives us, and I think this is the way to impact our children and their children. I want Waterstone. This is the last thing I will say. Waterstone has given me and my family much. We are very grateful for this church. There are people in this room that have meant so much to us over these years, because they have pointed us to the grace and mercy and presence of God, and I want that to continue for my kids and for your kids. Jesus is the way. Would you stand up, and let’s pray together. Let’s pray.

Holy Spirit, we thank you for your word, that even a story about a river so long ago can impact us today. Holy Spirit, we invite you into this moment right now. God, I challenge this room to think of a

person that they could connect with this week, and Holy Spirit, I ask right now that you would show us those people. Give us names. Give us faces. Nudge us right now towards other people. God, I pray for those of us in this room who are questioning, wondering, maybe waiting to know if God is going to see you, if He is going to move in your life. Holy Spirit, I ask that you would come right now with hope and encouragement. For those of us thinking about our kids right now, bring them back. Bring them back to you. Jesus, teach us and lead us in this next season that we have as a church. We lift you up, and we thank you that no matter what we are going through, you are always the way. Amen. Let's worship together.

There is one more river I want to share with you really quickly before we go. This is in Revelation 22, the last chapter of scripture: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal flowing down from the throne of God, down the middle of the great street, and on each side of the river stood the tree of life." The river of sin eventually becomes the river of life and blessing. God has made a way for us to live in that reality forever. Amen.

If you are new, welcome. We are so glad you are here. I would love to meet you, so I will be up here. Maybe I will try to get out there, so I would love to meet you. So don't just jump off too fast. Go get a cup of coffee and a donut and hang out. We would love to meet you. Receive the benediction, and we will be on our way, and now may you, Waterstone Church, go in the knowledge and in the way of Jesus, telling that story to anyone you draw us to, amen. Have a good week. Good to see you guys.

37:05 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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