Last week, we read about how God led Moses on his final days to as far as he would go…on the edge of Mount Nebo while overlooking the Promised Land. Moses had led the Hebrews out of Egypt, across the Red Sea and through the wilderness. The journey that was taken thus far was by no means a failure at all or was it over. There was still a way for them to go and many more challenges ahead before they reached their final destination. There were still many rivers and valleys that they must cross and mountains to climb. They must also conquer the land that was currently occupied by people who were much bigger and stronger physically than they were. But the people held on to their faith while acknowledging those have gone before them. They believed that God was on their side and would see God’s plan through completion in God’s timing.

Many Biblical scholars analyzed why it took the Israelites 40 years in the wilderness. Afterall, their journey probably would’ve only taken them at most 3-4 years, if they had only known where they were going….but they didn’t.

Nevertheless it was a journey of spiritual purging (or a time of preparation) among the people of God. Those who left Egypt were not ready at the time to conquer and to enter the land that God had promised to them. Only those who were born in the wilderness would eventually set foot into the Promised Land. This was all part of God’s timing and providence.

The Israelites were not ready to be a nation at the time when they left Egypt. After all, they had been enslaved for many generations in the past 400 years. They just accepted to do what they were told. But now all of a sudden, they had to lead themselves through the desert with this freedom that they now have. That was quite a daunting task that God had asked of them. Even Moses expressed doubt about his own ability and confidence in leading the people. Why me? Choose someone else?

With a new sense of liberation and freedom, the Israelites had to re-learn what it means to be a community not only with one another but with God. Our text this week leads us to yet another critical milestone of this **epic journey of liberation, courage and faith**, as they stood before another body of water - the Jordan River.

According to the Old Testament passage that we just read, when the Israelites came upon the edge of the Jordan River, fear set in once again as they came to a point of no return. *Great, where shall we go now? Turning back is not an option, we must keep going forward!* They weren’t sure of how deep the river may be underneath. So they began to panic. Although not as deep and not as wide as the Red Sea, the Jordan still represented a physical barrier…yet another challenge that needs to overcome.

Based on some Biblical historians, the Jordan River was probably around 100' wide and 3-10' deep during the normal non-flooding season. During the flooding season, the Jordan could be as wide as 600' and 150' deep. As they came to the edge of the river, those Israelites were determined to cross the Jordan no matter what, knowing that the land which God has promised them was just a stone-throw away. But the questions is -- **HOW**? How are we going to get from here to there? That is the question.

Crossing of Jordan may seem melodramatic compared to the crossing of the Red Sea, but nevertheless, it served as yet another testament of faith between the people of Israel and Yehweh their God. Time after time, obstacles after obstacles, God demonstrated that He remained their sovereign and faithful God who would never left them abandoned.

Traveling along with the Israelites were the written tablets of the Ten Commandment which were housed in the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark, there was also the staff of Moses and Aaron, and pieces of manna, which signified the presence of God and the former generation of leaders. Taking the Ark across the river was no easy task. Picture this in your mind as the Ark of the Covenant was being lifted high above the water by representatives from each of the tribe, as it was crossing the Jordan River.[[1]](#footnote-1)  The Ark offered the visible presence and Gods reminder and assurance that***Wherever the people go, God will always go ahead of them.”***

The ark led the way as the people were crossing the Jordan. It stayed in the middle of the river, as a sign of courage and confidence until everyone had crossed and reached the dry ground.[[2]](#footnote-2) It served as a great testament of faith as well as Gods provision in honoring the covenant that God had established with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and now with Moses and the generations to come.

Like the people who had wandered out in the wilderness for all these years, we the church today also find ourselves standing at the edge of trouble waters, as well as the Promised Land. We may not know how deep that water may be underneath, but we know that we must find a way to cross over it.

Notice also that when they were faced with challenge, the Israelites did not jump into action right away. They planned out strategically of how they would best proceed. **As the new chosen leader after Moses and Aaron, Joshua gathered all the people together, sought Gods wisdom by listening to the Words of the LORD and prayed to God in discernment and deliverance**.[[3]](#footnote-3) Instead of trusting in their own knowledge or abilities or forming a sub-committee, they invoked God to lead them throughout this process, trusting that God would perform yet another miracle amongst them.

How often might we, as a church, find ourselves in situations like those of the Israelites, standing at the edge of the river, at a state of uneasiness and uncertainty about our future? We cannot go back to our past, we can only go forward and stay on top of what’s happening in and around us. We realize how limited we are as human being, without consulting God for help. We debated over non-essential issues or how God’s church ought to be run according to OUR ways, while neglecting to listen to what the Spirit might be saying to us in a whole different way. We’ve squandering opportunities to be opened and be trusted in the Spirit’s leading. Weve become intimidated when we are faced with the uncharted territories and water of unknown depth. Or perhaps the Jordan River that is staring before our eyes is of one that we created ourselves.

Yesterday, November 1st was **All Saints’ Day** on the church calendar. It was a day in which we recognized and remembered many of those who have come before us, those who have paved the way, served their time and made the sacrifice, as well as those who will carry on the next phase of the journey – across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. Like the Israelites where were crossing the Jordan, on one hand we must reflect on our past but on the other hand, we must keep our eyes out for the future.

This church has also served as a beacon of faithful ministry over the past 114 years. None of us were there when it first chartered but we carry on the new responsibilities to carry on the torch on this next phase of the journey. God calls upon women and men of faith to step up and accept new responsibilities to continue to run this race together…just as Moses and Aaron had passed on the torch to Joshua (who represented the new generation) to lead them into the Promised Land.

People have come and gone, some have lived and passed on with their life journey. The community and its surrounding might have changed over the years, but one thing that we know for sure is that God’s mission and God’s eternal presence remain steadfast. God has put us right where we belong at the present time and in the present place.

**No matter how wide or how deep our Jordan River may be, we know that the God of our Covenant always go before us, leading us, guiding us, and protecting us from all unforeseen challenges ahead.** This is an exciting time but also a challenging time to be in ministry and to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ. It calls upon a great deal of imagination, courage and even greater sacrifice. God has called upon each one of us individually and collectively to take part of this critical phase of the wilderness journey in response to our calling.

Are we readyto step UP and to step INTO the river? God has called upon us to remain humble as God’s chosen servants, while acknowledging God’s leading in faithful obedience. As Jesus taught to the crowds and many of his disciples, ***“the greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”[[4]](#footnote-4)*  We are All Saints in God’s sight**, abiding faithfully in God’s teaching and God’s love. Together we can cross the Jordan and reach the “Promised Land” on the other side. Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Joshua 3:12* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Joshua 3:11 and 17* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Joshua 3:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Matthew 23:11-12* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)