

Joshua 4; Psalm 114; Remember and Believe I. For Combatting Forgetfulness II. For the Sake of our Children III. For the Sake of the Nations

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever forgotten something you should have remembered? I think it is safe to say that we all forget sometimes. But some events are worth remembering- birthdays, anniversaries and other significant days should not pass without our notice. This applies to the significant events of our salvation as well! It has often been said that the greatest enemy of faith is forgetfulness! So today as we return to Joshua, we find the Pillars of Remembrance. You will note that there seems to be 2 separate pillars- one set up in v. 8 in the middle of the river- Joshua set them up in the place where the priests stood in the bottom of the river which would be hidden when the waters return. And another one set up on v. 8- in the land of the Promise where the Israelites camp at Gilgal. These rocks are placed to rest in the location where the Israelites first entered the land of rest and stopped for the night. In the land promised to them, this 12-rock pillar would be a visible reminder of God's faithfulness. So today we are going to focus on the importance of remembering. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ calls the church to remember the works of God by which His people are brought into the Promised Land.

I. For Combatting Forgetfulness

In our first point we consider why it is necessary for Israel- and for us- to have reminders. And the first reason is this- we as humans are a forgetful bunch! Added to that, we tend to doubt what we have heard. Have you ever forgotten something that you should have remembered? Maybe you forgot your wife's birthday- or you forget to get the one thing you were supposed to get from the grocery store? Well, knowing how forgetful we are, most people use reminders. We make lists, we set out pointers that bring something to mind. Even our kids use songs to help them remember information or memorize facts. God, knowing how quick we are to forget, has seen fit to give us reminders. For Israel, this 12-rock pillar would do just that. As time goes on, God's people tend to downplay or minimise-

even rationalize the work of God. Did God hear and answer your prayers? Did He do as He said He would? Did God provide for you in your hour of need? Well, as time goes by, we start to forget- or we attribute this work of God to natural events. But God's word calls us- reminds us- do not forget! Remember what I have done for you! The word- remember- is in the Bible some 250 times! God will not forget- so His people must also remember! As Hosea 4:6 puts it, my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. So our God give us good reminders. As our passage says in v. 6- that this may be a sign among you! The word for sign here is a monument or pillar- but it could also be translated as a warning or omen. It is for remembrance. Israel had this pillar of stones- we however have the sign and seal of the sacraments! Remember what God's word says about the sacraments? Remember and believe! Take, eat, remember and believe in I Cor. 11. So the sacraments are one of the clear reminders that God has given to us for use today- to remind us of what Jesus has done for us! We are so prone to take these works of God for granted- to give little thought to His work! So our God calls us to slow down- stop for a moment! Remember! Did Jesus really die for your sins? Did He really rise again on the 3rd day? Remember what He has done! The fact that we are all quick to forget can be seen when we read our Bibles. How many times don't we come to a passage we have read before only to say- I don't remember reading that! Or think of the miracles that God performed? Did an ax head really float? Did a donkey really talk? Did the world really stop turning for a day? Did the waters of the Jordan really dry up? This 12-rock pillar made from stones taken from the middle of the Jordan will prove the fact- remember what your God has done! We need reminders because we tend to forget.

II. For the Sake of our Children

As our passage continues, Joshua is told a second reason why this 12 stone pillar is necessary. In v. 6-7 we find that this pillar is to be a sign among you. When your children see this place and ask about these stones, you are to tell them about how the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And again in v. 22- when the children ask their fathers- what do these stones mean? You are to let your children know that Israel

passed over the Jordan on dry ground. So the expressed reason for these stone were to be a reminder to the next generation! When walking through the countryside and you see this pillar- use it as an opportunity to instruct your children. In this way the history of redemption would be told again- the story of God's love and His wonderful redemption passed on to the next generation as parents told their children. Little one, our God has been faithful to our people! He kept us safe as we traveled through the wilderness- and He brought the waters of the Jordan to a halt so that we could pass over safely. God made a promise to Abraham over 400 years ago- and now that promise has been fulfilled. You are walking here in this land because God is faithful- He kept His word- and you are the recipient of God's special blessing! The fact is, children are prone to forget quickly as well- but they also arrive on the scene later. Events that we may remember- our little ones may have been too small to concretely bring to mind. For example, my younger children will not remember PEI- they were too young and it was years ago. But when you show them pictures, they suddenly remember! Added to this fact, as the older generation died out and a new generation was born, this message of God's mighty works needed to be passed on. The older ones who saw the Jordan dry up could pass on this experience by way of their words. In this call for parents to teach their children- to remember what God has done- we see a call for education- even within the church today. As a church, we must constantly remind the next generation! Let me tell you what our God has done! He parted the waters! He keeps His promises! As a church, we tell our little ones. This is who God is! This is what your God has done! This is who you are- you a part of the people that God has rescued! The identity of God and your identity! He is your God who has saved you- and you are His people! The ones He has rescued! And that is why it is so important that we bring our children to church with us! When our little ones see the Lord's Supper, for example. That is a prime opportunity for parents to instruct their little ones. When your child asks, what does this mean? What is this wine for- what is this bread for? Parents- tell your children. This wine points to the blood of Jesus that was shed! Jesus died on the cross so that you can have your sins forgiven! And when we

witness baptism- and the little ones ask- Daddy, why is the Pastor getting that baby wet? Answer them- well, little one, this is a reminder that Jesus needs to wash us- that His blood washes away our sins! The need for the education of the next generation still stands today! Let your children know the mighty deed that the Lord has performed! There is good news that the next generation still needs to hear! Remember that God is seeking Godly offspring! The good news is that God still keeps His Word! Jesus is the yes and the Amen to all of God's promises! He has promised to save all those who call on His name- and He will do it!

III. For the Sake of the Nations

But there remains one more area of focus- one more circle of influence- one more use for these memorial rocks. Not only as a sign to us- not only as an opportunity for us to instruct our children- but also for the sake of the nations. As we read in 4:24- These rocks will be a sign- so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty- and that you may fear the LORD your God forever. So that all the people of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty! This 12-stone rock pillar is a statement! Do you see what I, the LORD, have done? Do you know what I can do? In effect, the whole world is being put on notice! God can cover the world with a flood, He has also dry up the Red Sea and the Jordan River. He will protect His bride at all costs! These are but small things to the Lord- small glimpses of His power. For the Canaanites living in the land this pillar is an ultimatum. Kiss the Son or be terrified by His wrath! Find refuge like Rahab does- or be swept away and consumed like chaff! The fact remains, the church is charged with recounting the works of the LORD to the world! This pillar has an evangelical purpose! Yes, the LORD did do all the things that you have heard! He did destroy the Amorite kings- and He will destroy you if you harden your hearts! Although the Lord's Supper is for the church- there is an external purpose here as well! It is a proclamation of Christ death to the whole world as our forms read. Encouraging us to be faithful witness to this good news among our neighbors. As we carry this message to the world- sharing the story of God's love- the people of the

earth continue to know that the hand of the LORD is mighty! As we recount what God has done for us- as we retell of Jesus love and sacrifice- some will repent- while others will scoff. But these will be left without an excuse. The same God who held back the waters at the Red Sea so that His people could pass through- is the same God that swept Pharaoh and His army away! The God who held back the Jordan so that His child could arrive safely into the promised land will also cause the wall of Jericho to fall ensuring the destruction of its residents. The waters of the flood that carried Noah to safety also wiped out the rebellious ones in the land. So the sign of these rocks is an encouragement to remember- but also a sober omen for those who rebel.

As we close, our God would have us remember! And because we and our children tend to forget, He gives us His signs and seals. As the stones would jog the memory of God's deliverance for the Israelites, the sacraments give us opportunity to remember and believe! Jesus Christ calls the church to remember the works of God by which His people are brought into the Promised Land. So when an opportunity arises, remember and believe. Tell your children and tell others of the mighty acts of your God!