

“You have not passed this way before”

Joshua 3:4

Introduction: The people are gathered on the edge of the river to enter the land of promise. Their circumstances have changed, for the wilderness is behind them as well as a change in leadership. Among the last words spoken to them by Moses is found in the book of Deuteronomy. I draw your attention to chapter 8:2, ***"And you shall remember all the way which Jehovah your God has led you."***

We find them now standing on the margin of the land, behind them lay the deliverance from Egypt; the guidance of God for forty years in the terrible wilderness, and the daily supply of their needs. They had learned the lessons of deliverance, the lessons of humility, the discovery of themselves, and also the discovery of God in their hour of extremity and many a place of difficulty.

Now before them lay the great unknown. Joshua said to them, "You have not passed this way before." There were certain things about the land that was reported to them some forty years before, but for many of them that was a distant memory since they were children then. This evening we want to look at the responsibilities of anticipation. There are two things I wish to treat this evening. First, the uncertainty of the future, and second, the certainties of the future.

## **A. The Uncertainty of the Future.**

### **I. There is fascination about the uncertainty of the future.**

- i. We have a passion for the new, for discovery.**
- ii. We also have a desire for the better.**

(Think of the resolutions we make at new year). We pause and listen to the voice that comes singing out of the unknown, and it is the voice of hope. We hope for the better.

## **II. Think also of the Fear of the unknown.**

The people gathered on the margins of the land did not know the dangers they would encounter. The opposition they would face, what lay ahead beneath the mist covered mountains or how deep the river they were about to cross. If we do not know the foes, how can we be sure whether our strength is equal to them.

## **III. The Force of uncertainty.**

In thinking of the uncertain future, while we recognize the fascination, and know the fear; let us also remember the force of it. The force of the uncertain comes from the inspiration and preparation to meet the future. If I knew all the facts of the coming year, I might be careless. I do not know them; and out of the mystery and fog and silence there breaks one voice, "Watch!"

Joshua said to the men encamped near the river, with the land before them and the wilderness behind them, "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

Tomorrow for God: today for us. Today for us because we do not know tomorrow. The force and value of uncertainty is that it compels me to seek and put my life into right relation with the forces that are equal to tomorrow. It compels me to make preparation for effort, to be strong in the lord. If I am to march one step at a time, one day at a time, in the midst of forces that I do not know, over territory that I have never traversed, and if I have to deal with new unfoldings of mystery, I must be equipped and be ready.

## **B. The Certainties of the Future**

### **I. The first certainty is the past.**

They had all the experience of forty years with God. Deliverance prophecies

deliverance. Guidance predicts guidance. Supply promises supply. There was a river before them, but they could measure the river by the sea. He divided that, He can divide this. There is an unknown land before them. But measure the unknown land by the unknown wilderness. Going to a new country, we shall need to be fed with bread and water. Measure your hunger in the new land by the manna in the old. The one thing that no one can take from us as we face tomorrow is yesterday. You can confuse me about the problems of tomorrow, but you cannot confuse me about the solutions of last year. No man can ask you to doubt your own experience.

We have learned the lessons of deliverance. We have learned the lessons of humility. We have learned lessons about ourselves. We have learned lessons about God, all that in the experiences of the past.

## **II. The certainties of the present**

- i. A living leader (Joshua) (Jesus)**
- ii. A new symbol of guidance (the Ark) (The Bible)**

## **III. The certainty of the future.**

The word to Joshua and to us today is to be strong and courageous. We do not have the past, and the present is fast moving but we have the future with all its challenges.

**Conclusion:** We have never passed this way before, true, but we are not left to figure it out on our own. We have a history with God. We are to follow the living leader. We are to sanctify ourselves, we have a sacramental symbol, the Bible for guidance. We are to embrace the future not fear it. **Amen!**