



Legacy (Part 3) – Stones of The Chapel

Pastor Jerry Gillis – January 22, 2017

Well, Happy Birthday! Some of you are wondering if I'm like channeling my inner Frosty the Snowman. Do you remember how random his Happy Birthdays were by the way? Remember when you watched Frosty it's like every time he melted he'd come back and say "Happy Birthday", I mean like what? As a kid I was so confused, but I loved it. It was just so random, he just, I loved it.

So, I'm not confused, and I am not a snowman. The reason I'm saying happy birthday is because on this day, January 22nd of 1961, The Chapel was born. Fifty-six years ago, Pastor James Andrews and a handful of people, maybe nine people met and launched a church called "The Chapel". And it's interesting, because it's hard for us to be able to ever celebrate it on the exact date, because the date and the day of the week don't often match up where the 22nd of January is actually on a Sunday.

So for all intents and purposes, today is really a milestone in our church's history. And I think milestone is a good word to use, a milestone really kind of came out of the Greek and Roman background where they would

put like an obelisk on the side of the road, you know, kind of a stone deal that tapered up at the top, and it would mark the journey of people. And that's really what milestones do is they mark the journey of people as they travel on the road.

And you know, in our spiritual heritage as a people of God, stones have often marked the journey of so many people that came before us. When we begin to read the revelation of God, particularly in the Hebrew Scriptures we find out very quickly that stones kind of are really important in terms of marking the journey. I mean, you could run yourself all the way back to Noah when Noah got off of the Ark, he built a stone altar to worship the Lord. Or Abraham, after the covenant that God made with Abraham where He said, I'm going to make a people out of you and you're going to be a people that's going to basically rescue the world, that through you I'm going to do this. Abraham made an altar of stone both at Bethel and at Hebron. And then of course, you've got people like you know, those that followed Abraham shortly thereafter like Jacob, who when he wrestled with God built an altar of stone. Or Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai after receiving the Commandments and the instructions for the people of God built an altar of stone.

But of course, there's the one that I want to talk about today, and that's Joshua. You'll find the story that we're relating to in Joshua chapters number three and four predominantly and maybe just a little bit into chapter five. For those of you unfamiliar Joshua, Joshua was a friend of Moses and Moses I know that you know his name. Joshua was one who also came out of the bondage of Egypt when Israel was in captivity, and

God raised up Moses to lead them out. Joshua was with Moses when they were led out. And upon leaving Egypt he served and assisted alongside of Moses for a forty-year time period and after Moses' death Joshua was actually charged with the responsibility of leading Israel into the land of promise. The place where when they were coming out of Egyptian captivity, they were promised they were headed into a land of their own. But Moses was unable to enter into that promise and Joshua was taking over for him to lead the people there.

So where we pick up in our story is where Joshua has the people of God, after forty years prepared to enter in to the land of promise. And he is standing on the banks of the overflowing Jordan River. He is readying the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord across the river, and it's at that moment that God does something remarkable.

Listen to how the Bible records it in Joshua chapter three beginning in verse 14. "So when the people broke camp to cross 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 Zarethan while the water flowing down to the sea of 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. And 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, one from each tribe and he said to them "go over before the Ark of the Lord your God in to the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites to serve as a sign among you. 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 and when it crossed the Jordan the waters of the Jordan were cut off and these stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever." Then of course, the people of God crossed over just as they said.

And then in verse number 19 it says, "On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho and Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. And he said to the Israelites "in the future when your descendants ask their parents what do these stones mean, tell them that Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground 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 when He dried it up before us until we had crossed over."

It's a wonderful story, and there's a lot for us to be able to learn, and we only have a short amount of time to learn a few things. For our purposes

today, I want to remind you of something in this story that I think is pertinent to us and that we'll hopefully see flesh out, particularly as we celebrate a milestone on this day in the life of our church. What you can see from this passage of Scripture, I could summarize by saying this: That stones leave a legacy because they tell stories of God. Stones leave a legacy because they tell stories of God. The first story that these stones could tell when Joshua got them up out of the riverbed, or the people that he assigned to do that, they put them on their shoulder and they took them across to Gilgal and they set them up, I'm not sure in what exact arrangement they set them, but they set the twelve stones up.

The first kind of story that it tells us is that they tell us the story of God's faithfulness. These stones are speaking to us about God's faithfulness. You see, what we're reminded of in verse number 23, look at it again. It says: "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 when He dried it up before us until we had crossed over."

It's as if what God is saying to the people of Israel, is just as I was faithful to deliver you from the bondage of Egypt and I opened up the Red Sea so that you could escape and be delivered, I am just as faithful now when I have stopped the flow of the Jordan so that you can cross over into the land of promise. It's almost as if God is saying, I have not forgotten my promise to you that I made through Abraham that I'm going to ultimately deliver you, and in doing so I raised up Moses to get you across the Red Sea, out of the Egyptian captivity, and though there have been some hiccups in the process, I still haven't forgotten you. And I told you I was going to bring

you into the land of promise, and I am doing that today. So when you set these stones up, every time the kids come by and they ask what did these stones mean, you can tell them about my faithfulness.

Now were there any challenges between the time that Israel exited Egyptian captivity and crossed the Red Sea to the time later when they crossed the Jordan into the land of promise? Were there any challenges in between that? Yeah, like for one, when they crossed over the Red Sea and they were walking out making their way toward the land of promise, some of the people started complaining. And they started looking back to Egypt saying, we would rather be in Egypt, maybe at least we could get a good meal there. All this junk that God's providing for us out here in the middle of the wilderness, I guess it was lost on them that there was no food out there, and God was sending it from heaven for them. That wasn't good enough, they wanted to go back to Egypt.

Or maybe we could think about how when they got to the base of Mount Sinai, and Moses said hey, I'll be back, it's going to be a little while, but I'll be back. And he goes up and he meets with God, and God is giving him the commandments and giving him the instructions for Israel, and what do they do? Well, they start getting all beside themselves and say, we'd like to have a god that we can see. We'd like to have a god like everybody else in the nations around us. And so they took all of the stuff that they brought from Egypt that they were coming out with, the gold and the jewelry all that stuff, and they melted it down and they made a really big golden calf. Ah, here's our god! Now when Moses came down from the mountain do you think he was very enthusiastic about this development? Not at all. And

in fact, some people actually paid with their very lives for this kind of idolatry.

There was also a challenge in that Moses had commissioned twelve men to go in to the land of promise and to spy the land out. Go see what's going on over there. And so they all went. Two of them came back and said this is a land flowing with milk and honey. And yeah, there's some people there, but God's given it to us, so we can go. We can take this, because God has given it to us. But ten of them, ten of them besides Joshua and Caleb said oh, man you ought to see these people over there. They're giants. We look like grasshoppers in their sight. There's no way we're going to be able to do this. We're dead. And do you know what they did? They inspired fear and doubt in all of Israel.

And as a result, here's what God did. God said well, because you didn't believe and you doubted I am going to let you wander around in the wilderness one year for every day that they were in the promised land spying it out. Forty. And none of you that are walking around in the wilderness are actually going to live to see the land of promise, but your children will. All of you will die in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb.

So there were some challenges, because now Joshua who is certainly a bit older at this point, Joshua is about to lead them and does lead them in to the land of promise. And upon doing so, he does exactly what God says, he takes the stones, or those who were taking them on their shoulder, and when they get to Gilgal he sets them up as a memorial to God's faithfulness.

I can't help but imagine when Joshua was setting those stones in place, that he was not just thinking about God's faithfulness to him. He was thinking about God's faithfulness to everyone who had come before him. He was thinking about God's faithfulness to Abraham when God made a covenant with Abraham that didn't have anything to do with Abraham, it had everything to do with God. He was probably thinking about God's faithfulness to Isaac, who we thought maybe was going to die at the hand of his father, but did not. Who was the child of promise through which God was going to reveal His promise and His covenant to rescue the world through that line of people.

I imagine he thought about the faithfulness that God had shown to Jacob. And the faithfulness God had shown to Joseph, where it looked like maybe the Israelites were going to be extinct as a people but God raised Joseph up in the midst of the Egyptians to save His people from a famine.

And I'm sure he thought about how faithful God was kind of the man who had mentored him and led him, Moses. And how God had walked with him all of those years and now he's thinking about God's faithfulness to him. That there's this unbroken line of God constantly consistently being faithful.

You know, when I come to a milestone in the life of our church, I can't help but do the same thing. I have a tendency to just scroll back in my remembrance and just pause to think about the faithfulness of God to our church, and to those who've come before me or some of us. I think back with gratitude to God's faithfulness to James Andrews who fifty-six plus

years ago, God put in his heart to birth a church called The Chapel in a school. And that in doing that, God was faithful to launch a vision that was an act of faith by just a handful of people and the heart of a pastor who wanted to do it.

I'm constantly thinking back to God's faithfulness whenever I drive by on North Forest Road and I pass 895 North Forest Road, where The Chapel was located from so many years back. Where eventually when they moved out of that school, they purchased land and built a small place there, and then it began to grow and develop. And every time I drive by there I think about God's faithfulness to us. You know why? Because those stones at 895 North Forest Road, they tell a story. They tell a story of God's faithfulness to a people.

And then I think of God's faithfulness, and I'm so grateful that God showed His faithfulness to a congregation when the only spiritual leader that they had known for almost forty years died. They thought maybe that the place was going to close up because he was the founder and he died. But I'm grateful for God's faithfulness in raising up and bringing Pastor Al Cockrell to transition a church that needed healing, that needed to grieve, that needed to be able to begin to start thinking about what the future held. I'm grateful to God when I think of those leaders who went before me, because I realize even in this milestone that we're celebrating as a congregation of fifty-six years as a church, I realize that I'm standing on the shoulders of people who've gone before me. And I'm filled with gratitude because of God's faithfulness to them and to this church.

I'm filled with God's faithfulness and I'm overwhelmed by God's faithfulness when I think about how I came, just on a personal level, at the age of thirty-two and this place did not implode. No, like I'm dead serious about that. That God showed us grace in allowing us to all grow together and to enjoy the journey together. I mean in some maybe some sacred laws of the church it might should be illegal for a thirty-two year old to come and pastor a church like this. Yet God was gracious to us and allowed us. And all I can do is kind of remember God's faithfulness and how the founding pastor's wife and the founding pastor's family loved me and embraced my family, as we had the opportunity to come and to provide some sense of spiritual leadership here.

I'm astounded by God's faithfulness as I look back on how our church began to grow and expand and how we kind of needed a place to go because we over ran the property and the facility where we were, and how God and His faithfulness provided us the place that we're in right now. And how God's faithfulness overwhelms me when I think about how when compelled by a vision, we started moving out into the region. And we were able to not only launch another campus at Lockport and another campus at Cheektowaga but also engaging in so many things that we've done through Kingdom Come and Pastor Daryl Largis helping to lead that as God raised him up and all the churches that we planted in this process. I'm here to tell you all of those stones speak. They tell a story. And they tell a story of God's faithfulness.

But I don't want to be the only one to talk about the legacy of the stones that speak of God's faithfulness. I want some other people to be able to weigh in on that as well. So take a look.

The ministry of The Chapel has much to celebrate as we continue to grow and form. But who we are today rests on the larger foundation of God's enduring faithfulness. Reflecting on history, we can carefully trace His provision and direction to a legacy spanning decades of change, obedience and dedication. The story of The Chapel is rooted in the faithfulness of God and the faithful obedience of a few. God moved in the heart of founding Pastor James Andrews to raise up and lead a new expression of the church, launching its first service on January 22nd, 1961. Even as it grew, this community was known by their love.

Reverend Andrews, he lived across almost from Park School on Harlem Road. And one day when he was home, he had a heart to come back to Buffalo. He tells me, he told me that he was looking out the window and saw the school and thought, why not plant a church there? Did that for about a year in the Park School before getting some property on North Forest Road. And they just built a little building with a little stage. I just love thinking about that. The small beginnings of a group of faithful people who had a dream about a different kind of church. When I think those Pastor Andrews, and who he was, that's what determined what he did. I think about the fact that this was a man who had such great ability to follow through on what the Lord placed on his heart. That legacy is absolutely incredible.

As God opened up avenues for sharing the gospel, he also generously provided through His people. He allowed the North Forest facility to expand through several phases of growth and development in order to accommodate a growing community of faith. The people of The Chapel stood together, giving time, talents and resources, creating unique opportunities to present the truth of Jesus.

We had a huge Vacation Bible School that was an outreach to so many families. And sometimes because of the children, families started attending The Chapel

We bring them by the busloads. This year we've had fourteen bus routes.

I really didn't come into saving faith until later in my life, but Vacation Bible School was the seeds of that. I think God used that as a means to start to reveal himself to me in a, you know, childlike manner. And it also was the first exposure to the local church, what it meant to be a part of a loving family of people that cared not just for children but for one another.

One of the highlights of the year for many, many years was The Living Singing Christmas Tree. It was one of the first in the nation, and it drew thousands of people to come on campus. And I have heard personally and the church has heard a number of testimonies of people who first again were confronted with the claims of Christ as a result of their attendance at The Living Singing Christmas Tree.

In this season of abundance, it seems He was preparing this church family to trust his faithfulness in the face of a much more difficult season.

I remember hearing the news of Pastor Andrews' illness and pancreatic cancer. It hit us all hard, because this was our leader.

We don't ask for wealth, we're not even asking for health. We're asking for more of you. More about Jesus.

Every seat inside The Chapel today was taken. Thousands came for the memorial service of Reverend Andrews.

People one after another would say to me, well that pastor was such a dynamic person, when are we selling The Chapel? And my eyes popped out of my head. What do you mean when are we selling The Chapel? And they said, well he was the guy, he was The Chapel. And it gave me a wonderful opportunity to say some of my business colleagues, what are you talking about? The Chapel is the Lord's! And I said, I'm kind of thinking God has something else in mind.

What an incredible legacy that he has left.

Pastor Al comes and provides such stability in a season of uncertainty. He understood what his task was, because he was also helping us to see and experience God healing the wounds, while also readying us to march forward on a mission.

Buffalo, New York is a place where in the past, pastors knew each other, but they didn't work together. There wasn't a lot of unity. All of that has changed really under Pastor Jerry.

And Pastor Jerry really helped disciple me and actually help give a vision for what God was doing in my heart. I had been wrestling with a call to the vocational ministry for some time.

Through the growth of The Chapel, which was happening quickly, it became very obvious that the confines of the few acres we had on 895 needed to expand.

We thank God that he brought us, our family, and he wed our hearts with The Chapel family, and now we stand here at this window of opportunity. Wow. Did I actually sound like that? Just behind me is the acreage that we're looking at. And you know as well as I do that God has done a miracle in that. Not only are we purchasing part of that, but the other half God saw fit to move a man's heart to give it to us. So I would just encourage you that we as a church need to walk with unified courage as we walk with God through this process on the road to The Chapel at CrossPoint.

As The Chapel remained committed to gospel saturation, God continued to refine our mission and vision, leading us to more actively engage with partnerships and church plants.

When the vision of every man, woman, and child permeated everything that we did at The Chapel, it caused us to ask questions about the Kingdom of God. And so for the first time in the history of The Chapel, and at that time that was like 46 years, we decided and as a church, we launched our first church plant, The Chapel at Elmwood.

God just did an amazing thing. Ended up having seven theaters in that space, one for the adults, and then six for kids. And so, it was exciting.

In the following years, God led us further to launch not one, but two additional campuses, allowing us to begin coming alongside the communities of Lockport and Cheektowaga, and helping to build up a greater gospel presence.

So in addition to becoming one church on three campuses, we started planting churches, because the vision compelled us to do that. And we planted probably somewhere in the neighborhood or partnered to plan around 25 churches, maybe. And that's continuing to grow. But you know at this point in our ministry life, we have actually planted churches, and there are people that are worshipping in those churches, that represent twice as many people then there were at The Chapel when I arrived 15 years ago. So we've got twice as many worshippers in churches we've planted or partnered to plant. That's astounding in terms of Kingdom impact. And I thank God that that's a legacy that's being written in our church even today.

So being connected or being a part of the legacy of The Chapel just excites me, because it serves as an encouragement to who I am as a follower of Christ. And it has given me the confidence to know that if I just put my yes on the table, and I trust God, that He can do so many bigger things. And we as individuals can influence so many bigger things. And so when I think of the legacy of Pastor Andrews, having the courage to walk in obedience, to start something that God placed in his heart, it just is an encouragement on

how good and how great God can be when you're connected to something that is biblically driven, and aligned with the call that God has for your life.

For well over half a century, it is incredible to consider our history and trace God's hand at work. With gratitude and humility, we recognize the legacy of generosity and love laid before us. Planting seeds of truth and obedience, so that we might continue to sew into future generations. We know God is still shaping the ministry of The Chapel, and the story He is telling through this local church is nowhere near complete. We appreciate the decades of His faithfulness preceding this present season to remind ourselves of the legacy on which we stand. God's sovereignty and direction has led us. His provision and timing never fails. Together we celebrate this truth, marveling at all God has done, and believing in He will continue to do.

You see, that's the story that we're telling. The stones in Joshua's time told the story of God's faithfulness. But they didn't just tell a story of God's faithfulness, they also told the story of God's power. I want you to see this in the text itself. So I want you to look, if you will with me in verse number 24 at the very beginning. It says that "God did these things so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful."

Now I want you to pause right here for just a second, because it's as if what God is saying to Joshua and to the people of Israel, that just as I demonstrated my power in parting the Red Sea so that you could come out. And as I have demonstrated my power in keeping you in the wilderness, and as I have demonstrated my power in closing up the waters of the

Jordan so that they'd dry up so that you can come across into the land of promise, I am going to continue to demonstrate my power on your behalf.

Now there's a reason that God chose His power in these ways. It's not just for God showing off, it's actually to do something. And the reason that God shows His power often in Scripture, not solely this way, but often in Scripture is for two reasons. The first is because what God is doing in demonstrating His power is He is showing provision and deliverance for His people. And secondly, what God is also doing is He is giving victory over an enemy. This is what God often does.

In fact, when the people of God are crossing the Jordan into the land of promise, God is not only delivering them from their previous wandering, but He is also putting fear in the hearts of their enemies. Listen in fact, how it says this in Joshua chapter five verse one. It says: "When all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear, and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites." You see, what Joshua was doing in setting up these stones, they were going to forever testify, not only to the faithfulness of God who had always been faithful to them, but they were also going to testify to God's powerful hand in delivering them out of Egyptian captivity, delivering them into the land of promise, and giving them victory over their enemies.

You see, there's probably no better place that we see this principle than in the gospel itself. Even though this is in the Old Testament and the Old

Testament people of God, when we look at the gospel we actually see this principle demonstrated very clearly in the life of Jesus. Because Jesus, when He came as the Son of God, was the fulfillment of Abraham's prophecy and Abraham's covenant, that God was going to rescue the world through this people of Israel. And there's Jesus born in Bethlehem to an Israelite, and He is coming along the line of Abraham and David, and He is coming to rescue the world. And as He preaches the gospel, the good news that people can be reconciled to God, the enemy is working at the same time through people to make sure that that message ceases.

And sure enough, the enemy got exactly what he wanted, he got the Lord Jesus ultimately, or so he thought, to be crucified, dead and buried. And buried He was. Matthew chapter 27 tells it very plainly to us. It says this: "As evening approached there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. And going to Pilate he asked for Jesus' body that had been crucified, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own tomb that he had cut out of the rock. And he rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and he went away."

You see, here's how this principle is kind of played out and how we're reminded of it. Even though Jesus came and was promising deliverance for the people of God, it seemed as if that had ended and Jesus was crucified and He was buried and a large stone was covering the grave but I can promise you this, that stone was about to tell a story. And it was going to be a story of God's power. How an aging rock could not hold the Rock of Ages. That the power of God was going to be demonstrated in the death

and resurrection of Jesus Christ in such a way that it would deliver people from the bondage of sin and walk them into the salvation of reconciliation with God the Father. And in the same breath, would also defeat the enemy of our soul, Satan, whether that was him personally or death that he offered up to us to make us fear that all in the resurrection of Jesus, He has delivered us unto salvation and He has conquered our enemy so that we stand in victory with the resurrected Christ. This is the principle, this is the principle that we see played out in Joshua, and then we see it most clearly in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's why, ladies and gentlemen, that is why Peter referred to Jesus in the way that he referred to Him in 1 Peter. Listen to what it says in chapter two. Peter says: "As you come to Jesus, the living stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." For in Scripture it says, "See I lay a stone in Zion, a Chosen and precious cornerstone and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe, this Stone is precious."

You see, ladies and gentlemen, the reminder and the reason that Peter uses this language is because stones tell stories, they always have. They have been spiritual markers in our spiritual heritage. And now He says, because of the resurrected Son of God, who has delivered us out of the bondage of slavery and walked us into the land of promise, and has conquered and vanquished our enemies and our foes, whether that be Satan or death, that because of His resurrection, He is now the Living Stone. And when we hold

Him precious and put our faith and trust in Him we also, like Him, become living stones, that wherever we go our lives tell a story of the faithfulness and the power of Almighty God to raise up a sinner who is dead in their trespasses and set their feet upon a rock giving them a new song in their mouth and a firm place for them to stand. We ladies and gentlemen, are living stones. You are the stones of The Chapel. You are the stones.

You see, we all have a story to tell of the grace and the faithfulness and the power of God. And it doesn't just end. We are not dead stones like Joshua placed, where only when you came by them would you remember what God did in the past, but God did not intend for Israel to stay in Gilgal and stare at the stones and only tell the stories of yesterday. He said there is more land for you to take. There is more for you to do, because anything we remember about God's past faithfulness is for the purpose, ladies and gentlemen, of igniting our present faith because God is a God of the now.

Now, I'm having to say a lot in a short amount of time, so if I'm out of breath you'll just have to hang with me, alright? I'm almost out of voice, and I'm out of breath and I don't care, because I'm not out of enthusiasm for what we're talking about. You see, listen, this is important for us to understand and remember. God always calls us as His people to be a people who remember, but not to be a people who look back.

Some of you are going, wait a minute. Aren't those the same thing? Not according to Jesus, because Jesus said very clearly when He was talking about kind of the time of the end, He made a very succinct statement. Three words, and here's what He said: "Remember Lot's wife." What did

Lot's wife do? So here's the Jerry Gillis translation: Remember, don't look back. Remember, don't look back.

Here's why. We all have special times and seasons in our lives that God has done something unique and special and beautiful and great. But He doesn't intend for us to live in that space. He intends for us to remember His faithfulness so that will infuse our present faith. But He does not intend for us to stay there. Sentimentality, ladies and gentlemen is the enemy of faith. If we just say, man, remember what God did and we just want to go back to that, remember that? I wish that would be the same. C.S. Lewis said one of the most dangerous prayers and one of the most immoral prayers we could ever pray is when we say to God "encore". Do it exactly like you did it. As if God can't do something new. As if God can't do something brand new, and His purposes can't be worked out in the now. You see, God hasn't called us to live back in that space. He's called us to remember it, so that it fuels our future of trusting Him as we walk.

You see, there's a reason, because remembering and looking back aren't the same thing. Remembering is a mind position, but looking back is a eye position. See, when we remember, ladies and gentlemen, keep this in mind, like when you're passing an accident on the side of the road, if you see it as you're driving up to it and then when you pass it you remember that that happened, it actually makes you a better driver going forward. But if you look back, you are sabotaging your future. Remember, but don't look back. Why? Because He didn't intend for them to stay at Gilgal. And He doesn't intend for us to do that either.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here to tell you this day that there are more rivers to cross, there is more land to take, there are more stories to be told of God's faithfulness and God's power, because you and I are living stones infused with the power of the Living Stone within us. This is the story that God is weaving through The Chapel where we remember God's faithfulness and God's power in our history, and it fuels what God is going to do in the future.

We were on a vacation a few years ago, my whole family was, and we were in the New York City area. And in Long Island there's a place called Joan's Beach. And there's a great venue to see a concert there. We found out that John Mayer was playing there. John can tear up a guitar. I wish he would just sing and not talk, cause he gets into a lot of trouble when he does that. But we all decided we were going to see the show and we did.

One of the things that struck me is that in the show there was a bunch of people that were yelling out songs to him in his set. Usually it was something like this, you know, some twenty-eight year old woman who's going "sing 'Daughters'", sing 'Daughters'", right? That's basically what's going on. Here's what he did. He stopped his set, he didn't stop in the middle of a song, but he stopped and he started talking and he said, "you know," he said "I'm going to get to doing some of that from time to time, you're going to hear some things that you loved and about my music and stuff," he said, "but understand this, I'm going to do new songs tonight and you should want me to because what you fell in love with was at the time a new song. And I'm not done creating. And I'm not done writing songs. It's not that time in my life. So you should want that."

To The Chapel, I say the same thing. We are not done creating. We are not done writing new songs, because we are living stones. You see, we're not, The Chapel has an incredible heritage, and we celebrate the milestone of fifty-six years today. But we are not, like the Rolling Stones on a greatest hits tour. We are living stones on God's mission tour in the world! That's what God has called us to be. And because He's always been faithful, because He's always demonstrated His power, we remember that with deep gratitude, and it infuses our present and our future faith.

Let me give you a last thing here to pay attention to. Because stones leave a legacy and they tell a story of God, they not only tell stories of God's faithfulness and God's power, but they also tell a story that reminds us to worship God. I mean, when we find ourselves remembering what God has done and His faithfulness and His power, not only in the legacy of our church life but in our individual lives, it should bring us to a place of worship. Listen to what it says in Joshua 4:24: "God did all these things 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 you God." In other words, that everything God has done would inspire you to worship Him in the present, because He wants to do so much more. So, we should do that. Instead of just talking about it we should do that for a moment and then I will close us up after we finish. Alright? So stay put, stand to your feet and let's worship together.

Stay standing, stay standing. I want us to remember as a church the faithfulness and the power of God that has come before us. But we do that for the purpose of igniting our present faith. Because there are more rivers

to cross. There is more land to take. There are more stories to tell. And next week, I'm going to talk a little bit about how we can see more living stones. Because the mission for us is really clear, that in this region we want to see every man, every woman, every child have a repeated opportunity to hear, to see, to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what we're put here to do. This isn't just church talk and make us feel good talk, it's why we exist. It's why the church exists. And God is not going to leave us at Gilgal. He is going to call us into more lands. Why? Because we are living stones. We don't just stay in one spot and reflect. Where we go we bring with us the stories of God's power, the stories of God's faithfulness and stories that inspire a world to worship Jesus.

If you're here and you've never come to a place of surrendering your heart to Jesus and being transformed, being made a living stone then when we dismiss in a moment come by the Fireside Room, we'd love to talk to you about that.

And Father, for all of us, we want to pause to thank you corporately for your faithfulness to us as a congregation. You have been faithful and you will be faithful because it's who you are. You have shown your power on our behalf and you will show your power again on our behalf. Because it's who you are. Because you provide for your people when we live in the context of your mission and your will. And you will deliver us from the enemy as you have already done through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. And we pray, God, that you would allow us as a congregation to leave a legacy that just as we reflect on people whose shoulders we are standing upon, that we will one day be people whose shoulders can be stood upon,

because we are forwarding the mission of God in our generation. We trust you to do this among us for your glory, for the glory of your name. We pray all of this in Jesus' name. And all of God's people said together "Amen".

I love you folks, you're dismissed.