

“Looking Back to Look Ahead”  
Joshua 4:1-7

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After generations and generations of slavery, and after four decades of wandering in the Wilderness, the Israelites are finally entering the Promised Land.

You would think they would be anxious to forget the past. You would think they would be anxious to put all that in the rearview mirror.

But they don't. They insist on remembering their past. “Remember your past. Remember where you came from.” It's a constant refrain in the Old Testament. Remember God heard you in Egypt. Remember God fed you in the Wilderness. Remember God divided the water for you at the Jordan. Remember God was with you. That's the point. Remember God was with you. Remember God was with you.

Notice, they don't want to go back. They don't want to go back to Egypt. They don't want to return to the Wilderness. They don't want to go back and stand in the Jordan. But they do want to remember. The Israelites live in the present, but they know the importance of remembering the past. God was with us then. God is with us now. God was with us then and God is with us now.

Today, we are going to hear two presentations about the past and the present. What were we like as a church 20 years ago? How many services did we have? How many staff did we have? What was our budget? What were we like 20 years ago, compared to today?

Of course, we can't go back there. We don't want to go back there. But it's important to remember where we came from and how God was with us then and how God is with us now.

The past is foundational. But we can't live there. We have to be the church we need to be in this time and this place. We have to be the church for today.

Like our church, our community has changed over time. If our church is going to be effective at sharing the Good News of God's love, we have to know and understand the Fond du Lac of today.

And so, our 2<sup>nd</sup> presentation is about Fond du Lac today. How big are we? What are our basic demographics? What are the ministry opportunities available here and now?

Like the Israelites, we are entering new territory. Like the Israelites, we do not need to be afraid. Just as God was with the Israelites all those years ago, God was with us all those years ago. Just as God was with the Israelites as they began their new life in the Promised Land, God is with us as we begin our new life in Fond du Lac today.

God was with us then. God is with us today. God is with us today, and every day, as we move forward in ministry. Thanks be to God! Amen.