**Looking Back, Looking Forward**

**The Word**

Joshua 3-5

**The Big Idea**

As we enter transition moments (such as this transition from summer to fall) it is helpful to pause to look back on God’s faithfulness over the past season and surrender ourselves to God in trust as we look ahead to the next season.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Looking back on this summer, as you consider some of its challenges, where have you experienced God’s faithfulness and provision?

2. Looking forward to the fall, as you consider your hopes and plans, what do you need to offer to God, and what are some specific ways you’d like to see God move and work in your life?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

A. Today we are pausing to reflect in the midst of the transition from summer to fall. We are considering a passage in which Israel found itself in a transition moment between the wilderness and the promise land

B. Looking back with the 12 memorial stones (Joshua 3-4)

1. God commanded Israel to stop, reflect, celebrate, and remember his faithfulness before moving into the next stage of their journey.

a. The 12 memorial stones were a testimony to God’s mighty miracle of cutting off the waters of the Jordan River

b. The 12 memorial stones would also remind them of their entire time in the wilderness (which was bracketed by two water miracles: Red Sea and Jordan River)

c. The 40 years in the wilderness had been years of challenge and hardship, but they had also been years of God’s faithfulness, guidance, and provision.

2. Before moving to the next phase, it was important for Israel to stop and remember the Lord’s faithfulness, so that they would move into the promise land with faith and confidence in God. Likewise, it is important for us in moments of transition to look back and consider the faithfulness of God.

C. Looking ahead with the commander of the Lord’s army (Joshua 5:13-15)

1. Joshua was “near Jericho”

a. Most likely he was looking ahead to the battles to be fought in the promise land, strategizing about how to accomplish such a challenging goal

b. He was the new leader with big shoes to fill (Moses), and must have felt overwhelmed

2. Joshua’s encounter with the “commander of the Lord’s army”

a. Joshua’s question: “whose side are you on? Ours or theirs?” He assumes this person is an ordinary soldier

b. The commander’s/angel’s answer: “Neither”

1). That’s to say, “This is not about your side or their side. I’m on God’s side.”

2). That’s to say, “This is much bigger than you, Joshua. These are God’s battles to fight and his purposes to accomplish, and he will use you to do that.”

3. The call: “take your shoes off, for you are on holy ground.”

a. Before Joshua planned and strategized and then tried to get God to come along with his plans, he first needed to simply worship and encounter God’s holiness.

b. He needed the perspective that God was so much bigger than him and would be the one who would fight the battles.

c. This must have given this new leader comfort and encouragement.

4. When we enter a new season, before we start to plan and strategize, we first need to stop and worship and remember the bigger picture that God is in charge and his purposes will be accomplished, and we can join him in what he’s doing.